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Inter-Arab Affairs

Inter-Arab: Arab League Official Comments on Israeli Elections

NC3005201796 Cairo MENA in English 1935 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, May 30—(MENA)—Arab League Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs Muwaffaq al-'Allaf said if Israel is serious about peace and seeks co-existence in the region it has to honor all the commitments it made, whether the Israeli Labor Party remained in power or Likud party took over.

This came in comment on reports that the Likud party was securing a victory in the national elections in Israel.

However, he noted that nobody can disregard the hostile statements made by the Likud leader as they contradict the bases of the peace process.

This worries the Arab side, he stressed, calling upon the two sponsors of the peace process and the international community to press Netanyahu, if he emerged a winner, to proceed with the peace process and implement the international resolutions.

Meanwhile, Arab League Assistant Secretary General for Palestinian Affairs Sa'id Kamal underlined the necessity of continuing the peace process to attain the goals of the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied lands and the establishment of the Palestinian state, which the Palestinians strongly insist should be established even if the Likud ruled Israel.

Islamic Affairs

Political Islam Review: 'AQIDATI 21 May

NC3005163196

[FBIS Report] The following is a comprehensive review of all items in the 21 May edition of the Cairo Arabic language newspaper 'AQIDATI that pertain to political Islamic issues.

CONTENTS:

1. Al-Azhar Shaykh Rejects Internationalization of Jerusalem.
2. Writer Supports Awqaf Ministry's Supervision of Preachers.
3. Scholars Reject al-Turabi's Fatwa on Marriage
4. Fatwa Committees Express Opinions on Various Issues
5. Report Draws Gloomy Picture of Life in Asyut
6. Writer Discusses U.S. 'Bias' Toward Israel

AL-AZHAR SHAYKH REJECTS INTERNATIONALIZATION OF JERUSALEM

According to a 75-word report by Musa Hal on page 1, Shaykh of al-Azhar Dr. Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi has rejected the idea of placing Jerusalem under "international supervision." He said Jerusalem is Islamic in "flesh and blood" and must revert to Muslim sovereignty. Shaykh Tantawi also "denounced" Israel's "harassment" of Muslims in Jerusalem, describing its preventing them from entering the al-Aqsa Mosque as a "crime."

WRITER SUPPORTS AWQAF MINISTRY'S SUPERVISION OF PREACHERS

In a 200-word column on page 1, 'AQIDATI's Board Chairman Samir Rajab emphasizes that the Ministry of Awqaf is the only body responsible for appointing the imams and preachers of mosques. He adds that it is "illogical" for other parties, no matter who they are, to have a role in appointing imams and preachers "after what we have seen and suffered from in the past." Rajab emphasizes that Minister of Awqaf Dr. Mahmud Marzuq has the right to "transfer, appoint, or dismiss" whomever he wants as long as the aim is to make the mosques "centers of enlightenment" and not tools for "disrupting social peace," "blaspheming people", or "sowing seeds of discord and hatred among Muslims."

SCHOLARS REJECT AL-TURABI'S FATWA ON MARRIAGE

According to a 1,000-word report by Muhammad al-Abnudi and Musa Hal on page 3, Muslim scholars have reacted "angrily" to remarks by Hasan al-Turabi, leader of the Sudanese National Islamic Front, that there is no "clear text" in the Koran prohibiting the marriage of a Muslim woman to a Christian or a Jewish man. The report says the scholars rejected this "fatwa," which was broadcast by the BBC, describing it as a "departure from the teachings and principles" of Islam. Citing several verses from the Koran, the scholars say the Islamic Shari'ah allows a Muslim man to marry a Christian or a Jewish woman but forbids a Muslim woman to marry a Christian or a Jewish man. The scholars describe al-Turabi's fatwa as an attempt to "appease the West at the expense of the Islamic religion."

FATWA COMMITTEES EXPRESS OPINIONS ON VARIOUS ISSUES

Pages 4 and 5 of 'AQIDATI are devoted to the opinions of fatwa committees on various social and religious issues in response to questions by ordinary citizens who visit these committees to discuss their problems. One such fatwa prohibits surrogate pregnancies.

Another fatwa prohibits a woman from sitting alone with her fiance without wearing a veil and without being accompanied by an escort, who must be one of her close relatives. A third fatwa affirms that there are jinns, who, according to Muslim religion, are spirits that inhabit the earth, assume various forms, and exercise supernatural power.

REPORT DRAWS GLOOMY PICTURE OF LIFE IN ASYUT

A 2,000-word report by Muhammad 'Asim and Kamal Jabr on pages 8 and 9 describes a five-day visit they recently to paid to the Governorate of Asyut in Upper Egypt. The report, headlined "Neglect, Indifference, and Unemployment Are the Main Reasons of Terrorism and Violence," draws a gloomy picture of a place in which basic services, such as potable water, electricity, and telephone lines, are lacking. Garbage fills the unpaved streets, making them nesting grounds for mosquitoes. The buildings are derelict. Unemployment is widespread. There are not enough bakeries. "You need connections" to buy a loaf of bread, which is usually of poor quality and which in some places costs one Egyptian pound. The "open meeting" that Governor Dr. Muhammad Raja'i al-Tahlawi holds with citizens every Wednesday is no longer like before. Gaining entry to the meeting requires "connections." Only a few citizens are hand picked to see the governor. It is not unusual for a citizen to wait for one hour only to be told later that the governor is not there.

WRITER DISCUSSES U.S. 'BIAS' TOWARD ISRAEL

'Adil Dayf, in a 200-word column on page 20, says the "U.S. bias toward Israel" is not something new or a surprise. It is a "firm policy and a permanent strategy" that will never change. He maintains that in view of this "blind bias," the Arabs and Muslims must end their insignificant differences, rebuild their economy on new bases, stop relying on others, boycott countries that are hostile to them, and get rid of the debts burdening them and exhausting their resources. He concludes that "if we apply these principles with self-confidence, we will achieve all our objectives."

Political Islam Review: AL-SHA'B 24 May

NC3105090096

[FBIS Report] The following is a comprehensive review of all items in the 24 May edition of the Cairo Arabic language newspaper AL-SHA'B that pertain to political Islamic issues.

CONTENTS:

1. Majdi Husayn Discusses Press Law, Iraq, Sudan, Other Issues
2. Sudanese Figure Interviewed
3. Al-Wasat Party Said Not Front for Muslim Brotherhood
4. Writer Says Colonialism Planted Poisonous Seeds Before Leaving
5. Corruption Charges Against Minister's Sons Continue
6. Report Says U.S. Wants To Reshape Horn of Africa Region
7. Hizballah Secretary General Interviewed

MAJDI HUSAYN DISCUSSES PRESS LAW, IRAQ, SUDAN, OTHER ISSUES

On page 5 Chief Editor Majdi Ahmad Husayn puts together a 3,500-word article dealing with six separate issues. It is called: "Journalists, Bull-Fighting, and Other Stories."

Beginning with the continuing government-press standoff on Law No. 93/1995, which journalists believe is very restrictive, Husayn accuses the government of procrastinating over its declared agreement to amend the law. Noting that the government threw out a proposed bill to replace this law, which was jointly prepared by government and opposition journalists, he declares that, currently, the journalists' greatest wish is to see Law No. 93/1995 rescinded and the old unsatisfactory press laws reinstated, because nothing more can be hoped for. He compares the press corps with a bull that the matador, the bull-fighting government, is trying to exhaust before delivering the coup de grace.

This issue of AL-SHA'B refers in several other places to the ongoing campaign by the Journalists General Assembly to have the press law amended.

The second issue the article discusses concerns an Egyptian Foreign Ministry report that is said to have been published by the magazine AL-WASAT.

The report refers to attempts to establish alliances and axes in the region and to restrict Egypt's freedom of movement while at the same time laying siege to all its neighbors. The report notes that the United States is promoting Nigeria as a candidate to represent Africa at the UN Security Council. To balance these threats, the report proposes "turning over a new leaf" with Iraq, Iran, and Sudan, promoting Egypt's relations with Russia, China, France, Japan, and Germany, and boosting cooperation with Syria, Yemen, and Algeria.

Majdi Husayn says that sometimes the Foreign Ministry prepares good reports but these are then allowed to gather dust in government cabinets. He refers to the threat of the Israeli-Turkish military agreement and notes that Egypt is not part of any Arab bloc, its application for membership in the Arab Maghreb Union having been rejected and its overtures to the Gulf Cooperation Council rebuffed.

He says the Egyptian opposition will back any government action to mend fences with Iraq, Iran, and Sudan but warns it not to be too slow in doing this, citing the Arab proverb: "Sometimes slowness can kill."

Referring to ties with Iraq he says: "True, after six years of siege there is now an unofficial Egyptian trade delegation in Iraq. But when the nation is faced with a deluge you cannot fight it with an umbrella and when the hostile axis is moving with the speed of a rocket to close ranks and conclude alliances we cannot confront it with an Arab reconciliation effort that moves at a snail's pace. Do not fear the United States so much. Brace yourselves and go to the end of the road. The United States will then treat you with respect."

He denies that there are any grounds for continuing Egyptian-Sudanese hostility and says that even if some Egyptian opposition groups operate in Sudan the government must remember that Sudanese opposition groups also operate openly in Egypt. He supports the view that the three suspects in the attempt to assassinate President Husni Mubarak are in Afghanistan, not in Sudan, and questions the secrecy surrounding the trial in Ethiopia of other suspects in the case. He says that perhaps Ethiopia is trying to conceal the suspects' links with Israeli or Western intelligence agencies.

He remarks: "The Egyptian Government must set aside the fictitious issue of the suspects' extradition, because the challenges facing the nation leave no room for such a frivolous attitude. If Sudan is willing to conclude security agreements with Cairo, what more does the government want? Everyone who diverts our attention from the need to confront our major enemy is sinful. Everyone who refuses to settle the disagreements with the brothers, but cooperates with Israel under the motto 'everything is negotiable' is sinful. Please note that Egypt is outside all Arab blocs and that its neighbors are under siege (Libya, Sudan, Gaza). Egypt must create its own axis by rallying together all or most of the Arab countries. This axis should not be limited to King Husayn and 'Arafat, because in that case it will be solely devoted to normalizing ties with Israel."

On the third issue, Majdi Husayn notes that the government is apparently no longer passing death sentences on defendants in security cases where no murder has been committed. He says this is in line with an Islamic shari'ah dissertation prepared by the opposition in 1993 and stressing that capital punishment should be imposed only in murder cases. Citing other opposition victories, he says that some successes have been achieved against corrupt officials and that cases of torture in jails have been reduced.

The fourth issue deals with conflicting reports about Najwa Ibrahim, a top television presenter, who is said to be considering wearing the Islamic veil and retiring from public life, and the profound effect that this has had on officials in senior government circles.

Majdi Husayn writes: "Najwa Ibrahim's scarf has created a state of emergency in these circles that the Israeli war against Lebanon failed to create. Some officials of Cabinet rank are trying to remove Najwa Ibrahim's scarf and persuade her to return."

The fifth issue consists of brief thanks from Majdi Husayn to members of the public who supplied him with documents about 'Adil al-Alfi's business deals. 'Adil al-Alfi is the son of Interior Minister Hasan al-Alfi. Referring to the court action against him, Majdi Husayn declares: "If, God forbid, I am imprisoned, I urge citizens who called me previously to continue contacting the newspaper. They can rest assured that the concerned journalists will exercise their legal right to maintain the confidentiality of their sources."

Note: On 28 May 1996, as reported by MENA, a Cairo appeals court passed a one-year suspended sentence against Majdi Husayn in a libel action brought by another son of the interior minister, 'Ala' al-Alfi.

Issue number six in this article is a tribute paid by Majdi Husayn to "the Chechen jihad against the forces of Russian tyranny." It consists of a translation of a Chechen war poem, which Majdi Husayn admits is a poor translation, because he is not a poet.

SUDANESE FIGURE INTERVIEWED

On page 4 the paper publishes a 4,000-word interview conducted in Khartoum by Muhammad Badr with Dr. Ghazi Salah al-Din, secretary general of the Secretariat of the Sudanese National Congress. Salah al-Din discusses the positive role that can be played by popular diplomacy in bringing Sudan and Egypt closer and praises recent preliminary agreements with the country's southern rebels. He says there is considerable freedom to express views in Sudan and that he expects the new constitution that will be formulated by the existing parliament to allow private radio and television stations to operate. Asked about political pluralism, he says Sudan does not reject pluralism out of hand but the underlying principle of the Sudanese system must be Islam.

AL-WASAT PARTY SAID NOT FRONT FOR MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

A 2,000-word report by 'Isam Yunus on page 3 discusses attempts by defense lawyers to prevent the authorities from referring the founders of the al-Wasat Party to a military court on the grounds that such a referral is unconstitutional.

Asked if al-Wasat is a front for the Muslim Brotherhood, Chief Defense Counsel Salim al-'Awwa told reporters after a recent court session: "The charges against the people held in custody in this case state that they have tried to circumvent the law by forming a political party that would be a front for the Muslim Brotherhood. I wish to assert that this party has no connection with the Muslim Brotherhood. It just happened that some of the party's founders had links with the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed the Muslim Brotherhood has resisted this party."

WRITER SAYS COLONIALISM PLANTED POISONOUS SEEDS BEFORE LEAVING

In a new installment of a series of similar articles berating Arab kings and presidents, Muhammad 'Abbas writes a 3,000-word article on page 12 under the headline "Piled up Waste and Sacred Idols."

He advances the view that the colonial powers were not forced to leave the Arab and Islamic countries that they occupied, but departed voluntarily after discovering that their continuing occupation of these countries enhanced the people's "religious faith, unity, and national identity." So they left after planting "poisonous seeds and explosive mines" in the minds of the nation's leading intellectuals and rulers to finish the job of undermining Islamic culture that the colonialists themselves failed to do. Attacking Western culture as the most "criminal civilization" in history, he says it is responsible for the starvation of 50 million people a year, the murder of 100 million Red Indians, the enslavement of 100-200 million Africans, and 70 million deaths in two world wars this century.

He says the only civilization capable of being a global one is the Islamic civilization and this explains the West's hostility toward it. He praises Chief Editor Majdi Husayn and says he is the target of a concerted attack to silence him, not only by the "local tyrants," but the "keepers of the new world order."

CORRUPTION CHARGES AGAINST MINISTER'S SONS CONTINUE

The paper continues to accuse Interior Minister Hasan al-Alfi's sons of corruption. The 500-word lead story on page 1 says "AL-SHA'B has obtained explosive documents proving that 'Ala' Hasan al-Alfi, his mother, a former minister, three governors, nine police major generals, more than 20 bank and company directors, and some businessmen have formed an agricultural company called the al-Qadisiyah Agricultural Reform and Development Company. This company has illegally seized state-owned land in Cairo Governorate."

On page 8 there is another story that says 'Adil al-Alfi has bought a commercial store for 1.15 million pounds and has turned it into a fashionable U.S.-style restaurant. Next to the 600-word report there is a facsimile of the sale contract by which 'Adil al-Alfi acquired the store.

REPORT SAYS U.S. WANTS TO RESHAPE HORN OF AFRICA REGION

A 500-word report by Mahmud Bakri on page 1 says the United States is preparing, in total secrecy, a dangerous scheme to redraw the map of the Horn of Africa, partition Sudan, and create two large federal states that will cooperate with the United States and Israel.

HIZBALLAH SECRETARY GENERAL INTERVIEWED

On page 7 the paper publishes an approximately 1,000-word interview with the secretary general of Lebanon's Hizballah, Hasan Nasrallah.

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Says Netanyahu Win 'Tantamount to Declaring War'

JN3005120396 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1100 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] On the Palestinian arena, the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, said that the possibility of Binyamin Netanyahu's election as Israeli prime minister will be tantamount to declaring war against the Palestinians and Arabs. Radi Muhammad, a Hamas official in Gaza, said today that the Israelis do not want peace, noting that the results of the elections are a shock to the whole world, including the Palestinians themselves.

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Describes Netanyahu Victory as 'Declaration of War'

TA3005125396 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1200 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] in Gaza has described Netanyahu's victory in the elections as a declaration of war against the Palestinians and the Arabs. Ghazi Muhammad, a Hamas leader, said the Israelis do not want peace and warned that there might be a crisis in relations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Palestinian Affairs: Palestinian Figures React to Israeli Election Results

TA3005133996 Jerusalem JMCC PRESS SERVICE in English 1200 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Following are a number of reactions by PA [Palestinian Authority] officials and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] leaders in Gaza on the Israeli elections results:

PA Finance Minister al-Nashashibi: "The Israeli elections were not voting on the peace process, but voting to decide who will continue the peace process."

Presidency Director General Tayyib 'Abd-al-Rahim: "These are preliminary results, and even if Peres lost, the new government must continue the peace path as the Palestinian-Israeli agreement is an international one. All the parties have to be committed in order to implement this agreement. President 'Arafat is very interested in the results and he is following the announcement of them, because they will decide the Israeli future relationship with the PA."

Shaykh Sayyid Abu-Musamih, one of Hamas leaders in Gaza: "The results are very bad, there is a progress in the religious parties and the Likud, and this will have a negative impact on the whole region. The Likud will start a plan in order to abort any peaceful project."

Palestinian Affairs: Official Says PA To Deal With 'Any' Ruling Party in Israel

TA3005145796 Gaza AL-HAYAH AL-JADIDAH in Arabic 27 May 96 p 1

[Report by Muhammad Karim]

[FBIS Translated Text] Hasan 'Asfur, deputy head of the Palestinian negotiating delegation, has stated that reports linking the final solution talks to the Israeli elections are inaccurate and have been exaggerated by the media. He said that these talks began a short while ago in Taba and that their timetable and mechanism have been drawn up. They will be followed up both officially and unofficially.

'Asfur added that the Likud Party is facing a hard test to prove the seriousness of its statements on dealing with the Palestinian National Authority. He noted that this Authority is a fact and that it is extremely difficult to bypass or ignore it unless some Israeli party wants to return to the state of war, the cycle of violence, and the climate of the occupation. It can be said that the Palestinian people are ready for all possibilities and options.

'Asfur added that the PA [Palestinian Authority] is ready to deal with any quarter or ruling party in Israel and that the PA's position will be determined in light of the Israeli election results.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Talks With Egypt's Musa, Receives UN Envoy

JN3105055096 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0500 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A telephone call took place last night between President Yasir 'Arafat and Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa. They reviewed the latest political developments in the peace process, both in Palestine and the region, especially issues related to the final status negotiations with the Israeli Government.

Later, the president received Terje Larsen, representative of the UN secretary general, at the presidency in Gaza. They reviewed conditions in Palestine in light of the continuing Israeli military and economic siege on the Palestinian people.

Palestinian Affairs: Ashwari Views Likud Government in Israel

LD3005194896 London Channel 4 Television Network in English 1800 GMT 30 May 96

[Interview with Hanan Ashrawi, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, in Ramallah, by correspondent Zeinab Badawi in London on 30 May; from the "Channel Four" newscast — recorded]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] [Badawi] Do you think a Likud government will spell disaster for the peace process?

[Ashrawi] I think that is an oversimplification of issues. We live in a very complex reality, we are part of a peace process which came about as a result of international and regional considerations and there is a will of the international community to make it succeed. We also have agreements that have been signed which no self-respecting government can renege on.

[Badawi] Well, on the other hand, Mrs. Ashrawi, this is a man, Binyamin Netanyahu, who has said he will not cede any territory for peace, he say's he will expand the Jewish settlements, and he has only offered the Palestinian's limited autonomy. This is not a man you can do business with?

[Ashrawi] Well, this is a man whom the Israeli's have chosen, if the final results hold for him, and in that sense we have to deal with him. Now, I would like to distinguish between campaign rhetoric and between actual policy making. And I believe being in the opposition gives you the luxury of speaking out and of escalating this rhetoric, but once he is in power, in position, he is going to understand that he has to reckon with other realities and that peacemaking is not a unilateral act — right now it is a bilateral action — and he has to deal with us as Palestinians. But it is also an international commitment and he has to deal with those realities as well.

[Badawi] Well, I must just pursue one further point on this certain issue, which is the question of Jerusalem. Next month there are going to be talks on Jerusalem, but Mr Netanyahu say's he will not even discuss it. What are you going to do about that?

[Ashrawi] Well, there is a commitment, there is a signed agreement and a declaration of principles that firmly places Jerusalem on the agenda for permanent status talks. Now I don't believe that he can renege on that, or he can decide that he wants to restructure the peace process as he sees fit. If the Israeli Government committed itself to this process I don't think it is subject to amendment right now because of a party change.

[Badawi] What about Binyamin Netanyahu's dealings with Syria?

[Ashrawi] Well, I think he will try to deal with Syria on the basis of his own preconceptions again where he made promises, preelection promises, granted, that he will not cede any land. Actually he is returning land which doesn't belong to him, but he is not going to do that, and he wants to make peace. Now this sort of unilateral approach to things is not going to work. Now if he wants genuine peace with Syria he will have to deal with the issue of returning the land occupied in '67 — the Golan Heights. This is going to make the task of Arab negotiations with Israeli more complex, more difficult, and will necessitate a much higher degree of coordination, of solidarity and strategic thinking, actually.

[Badawi] Very briefly, Mrs. Ashrawi, do you expect there to be trouble from Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and other extremist Palestinian groups if Binyamin Netanyahu becomes prime minister?

[Ashrawi] Not unless he starts taking action, and he starts imposing facts, creating facts, building settlements, and carrying on with annexation of Jerusalem, because people here are not violent, anyway without provocation. If Netanyahu begins to violate the peace process, then I am sure he will have definite reactions.

Palestinian Affairs: Cabinet, PLO Executive Committee To Meet 'This Evening'

JN3105093396 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0900 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat will preside over a joint meeting of the cabinet and the PLO Executive Committee at the presidency in Gaza this evening.

Presidential adviser Nabil Abu-Rudaynah said that the meeting will deal with the latest political developments, in addition to a number of economic and political issues and topics.

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Leader Denies Agreement Reached With PA

TA3005133796 Ramallah AL-AYYAM in Arabic 27 May 96 p 1

[Report by 'Abd-al-Ra'uf Arna'ut]

[FBIS Translated Text] Shaykh Sayyid Abu-Musamih, one of the leaders of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement], has said that reports to the effect that the Palestinian Authority [PA] and Hamas had reached a draft agreement were "inaccurate and incorrect."

Abu-Musamih, who met several days ago with Shaykh Ahmad Yasin in prison, told AL-AYYAM that the meetings between Hamas and the PA are continuing. He said: We hope to reach an agreement before long.

Abu-Musamih added: "Preparations are currently under way for a comprehensive dialogue." He expressed the hope that the PA-Hamas talks will be held abroad on the pattern of the Cairo talks before the legislative elections.

Abu-Musamih affirmed that Hamas will not be transformed into a political party, adding that it is a pragmatic movement that views developments with realism.

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Sources on Dialogue With PA, Contacts With Israelis

TA3005142196 Jerusalem AL-MANAR in Arabic 27 May 96 pp 1, 15

[FBIS Translated Text] Informed sources close to Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] have told AL-MANAR that the movement wants to resume the dialogue with the Palestinian Authority [PA] and that this desire was relayed recently in writing to the PA.

The sources added that the PA refuses to resume the dialogue before Hamas adopts new bases for it, most important of which is a permanent and lasting halt to all types of military operations.

The same sources disclosed that Hamas has been holding secret meetings over the last 10 days with the participation of its most senior leaders in the Palestinian territories to draw up a new formula for the dialogue that could serve as its political program with a view to formulating a new charter for the movement. The sources added that Hamas is examining the possibility of asking the National Authority to allow it to participate in PA institutions, especially as it will take part in the local council elections.

The sources revealed that the Hamas leaders abroad refused to receive the emissaries of the inside leaders and that a week ago Tehran, through the outside leaders, summoned some of the inside Hamas leaders, but they refused the Iranian invitation.

The sources said that the inside Hamas leaders informed the PA of their repudiation of the terrorist organization whose members were captured recently by the Authority. The leaders said that they had no connection with this terrorist organization.

The sources stressed that contacts are being held between the inside Hamas and the Israelis. They noted that meetings have taken place between the two sides in Cyprus, at the Palm Beach Hotel in Limassol.

Palestinian Affairs: PNC Speaker Reveals Contacts for 'Arafat Visit to Syria

TA3005153996 Gaza AL-HAYAH AL-JADIDAH in Arabic 28 May 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Amman, QUDS PRESS — A responsible Palestinian source has disclosed the existence of intensive Palestinian contacts aimed at arranging a visit by President Yasir 'Arafat to Damascus for a meeting with President Hafiz al-Asad aimed at ending the rift between the two sides.

Palestine National Council [PNC] Speaker Salim al-Za'nun told QUDS PRESS that he senses a real desire by Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad to restore Arab coordination to its previous situation when al-Asad met with Arab parliamentary delegations that participated in the Arab Parliamentary Union meetings in Damascus on 16 and 17 May.

Al-Za'nun added: "The interim stage has ended and the final stage has begun, and since the Syrian position is identical to the Palestinian position on the issue of Jerusalem there is no harm in restoring Syrian-Palestinian coordination." Al-Za'nun expressed the hope that President al-Asad would receive a delegation of the new PLO Executive Committee, to be followed by President 'Arafat's visit to Damascus.

Al-Za'nun affirmed that Palestinian-Syrian relations are undergoing a rapprochement. Al-Za'nun added that Faruq Qaddumi, head of the PLO Political Department, instructed him to follow up the arrangements for the visits to Damascus by the PLO Executive Committee delegation and President 'Arafat, and to meet with Syrian officials in this regard. He said that contacts are under way to discuss the details of a ceremonial reception. [passage omitted]

Palestinian Affairs: Tantawi—Suicide Bombers 'Best Martyrs'

MM3005133496 London FILASTIN AL-MUSLIMAH in Arabic May 96 pp 24-25

[Unattributed report: "Al-Azhar Ulema Front Issues Historic Fatwa: Suicide Bombers Best Martyrs; Palestine Sacred Land for the Sake of Which Lives, Blood, Property Should Be Sacrificed"]

[FBIS Translated Text] While Dr. Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, shaykh of al-Azhar, had said in one of his lectures that Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] elements who kill Israelis are not the same as the martyrs who fall on the battlefield, the al-Azhar Ulema Front [jabhat 'ulama' al-azhar] [AUF] has intensified its meetings to clarify matters and explain the religious opinion of this question in view of the condemnation of these operations by some voices. The Front issued a statement supported by religious evidence and entitled "Exoneration and Clarification," in which it declared the permissibility of suicide operations, stressing that those who carry out such operations are the best martyrs before God.

The Front's fatwa said that Palestine is a sacred land for the sake of which lives, blood, and property should be scarificed, because its martyrs are the best Muslim martyrs, God willing. It pointed out that al-Azhar will not cease to support the Muslims' issues, first and foremost the Palestinian issue. The statement urged Muslim and al-Azhar ulema to respect the sanctity of al-Azhar's campus and to keep it out of partisan campaigns which might be aimed at supporting the campaign of capitulation and contempt for the Muslims' issues. The statement said that al-Azhar with its institutions is, praise be to God, carrying out the duties assigned to it.

Out of its respect for the rules of dialogue when discussing religious matters, the Front was keen not to name in its fatwa the ulema who condemned suicide operations and declared the perpetrators as nonmartyrs. It just said: "A statement was made by some ulema which we believe is merely an opinion, rather than a religious fatwa or ruling." The Front adopted this stand to avert any clashes or disputes.

The Front said in its fatwa: "Had it not been for the fact that the AUF's name was mentioned in this sedition, it would have remained silent, especially as al-Azhar has institutions concerned with its affairs and leaders who speaks on its behalf. But now that there is a need to explain matters, it is unacceptable to delay clarification. How can people equate those who die for the sake of their rights with those who die because of despair?! The former — as the prophet, peace be upon him, said — is a martyr. As for the latter, he is a suicide. The Front based its fatwa on the following hadith [sayings of the prophet] and verses: 'Abdallah Bin-'Amr cited the prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "Anyone who dies for the sake of his property is a martyr." And Sa'id Bin-Zayd said: "God's messenger, peace be upon him, said that anyone who dies for the sake of his people is a martyr, anyone who dies for the sake of his religion is a martyr, and anyone who dies for the sake of his blood is a martyr." Al-Tirmidhi and al-Nisa'i cited Suwayd Bin-Muqrin as saying: "Anyone who dies for the sake of his rights is a martyr." Thus al-Sunnah guarantees martyrdom for those fighting for their rights.

Abu-Bakr Bin-'Abdallah Bin-Qays said: "I heard my father say: The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: The doors of heaven are under the shadow of the sword. So a man stood up and said: Abu-Musa, did you hear the Prophet, peace be upon him, say that? He replied: Yes. So the man returned to his companions and said: Peace be upon you. Then he took his sword and went to fight the enemy until he was killed."

Aslam Bin-'Imran al-Tajibi was cited by Abu-Dawud and al-Tirmidhi as saying: We were in al-Rum [as transliterated] city, so a large number of Romans were mobilized. A Muslim attacked the Romans until he was surrounded by them, so people said: O God, how could he push himself toward destruction? But Abu-Ayyub said: O people, your interpretation of the verse is wrong. The verse was revealed because God reinforced Islam and increased its supporters. So some of us said secretly: Our property has been lost, and God has reinforced Islam and increased its soldiers, so God revealed the following verse to his Prophet, peace upon him: "And spend of your substance in the cause of God and make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction." The destruction here means caring about property and abandoning conquests. Abu-Ayyub continued to fight for the sake of the cause of God until he was buried in the Romans' land.

Al-Qurtubi cited al-Qasim Bin-Mukhaymirah, al-Qasim Bin-Muhammad, and 'Abdallah [one of the Maliki ulema] as saying: There is no objection to a man attacking on his own a great army if he is strong and believes strongly in God. If he has not got the strength, it would be a move toward destruction.

Al-Qurtubi said: It was said that, if he sincerely seeks martyrdom, he can attack them, as this is clear in the verse revealed by Almighty God: "And there is the type of man who gives his life to earn God's satisfaction." Abu-Khuwayz Mindad al-Maliki was cited as saying: "If a man attacks 100 soldiers or a group of thieves or fighters, there are two cases: if he knows or believes that he will kill them and escape unharmed, that is fine. It is also permissible if he believes that his death will be of great benefit to Muslims."

Muhammad Bin-al-Hasan al-Hanafi said that there is no objection to a lone man taking on 1,000 atheists if he is seeking to save his life or defeat the enemy. If that is not the objective, his action is abhorred, because he has exposed himself to harm without any benefit to Muslims. If his intention is to encourage Muslims to do what he did, that is permissible, because it is useful for Muslims. If his intention is to terrorize the enemy and inform him of the Muslims' adherence to their religion, it is permissible. If his intention is to reinforce God's religion and weaken atheism, it is a noble action, of which Almighty God said: "God hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise)."

Thus anyone who fulfills his obligations toward God and Muslims in Palestine and elsewhere — as stressed by the fatwa — is not denied the reward of martyrdom.

Al-Azhar ulema added that a usurper has not got the sanctity of what he has usurped, nor has his blood any protection. The Jews, usurpers of Palestine, do not differentiate between civilians and fighters...they all are fighters. The best proof of this is the fact that the murderer of the al-Ibrahimi Mosque, Goldstein, whom they consider a hero, was a civilian who exposed the true intentions of all Jews, and under the pretext of peace the Jews continue to seize more parts of the blessed land, Palestine, at the rate of 1,500 feddans a month.

Palestinian Affairs: Al-Nashashibi Urges Arab Summit To Face 'New Developments'

JN3005120996 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0900 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Finance Minister Muhammad Zuhdi al-Nashashibi asserted the importance of convening an Arab summit with the aim of pooling efforts to face up to the new developments of the peace process. Al-Nashashibi said that the peace process now is stronger than ever, noting that the agreements were signed under international auspices. In statements to our radio, al-Nashashibi said that it is necessary to lift the Israeli-imposed siege on Palestine.

Algeria

Algeria: Bodies of Murdered Monks Found

LD3005164896 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1600 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Ministry of Interior and Local Communities has announced this afternoon that the bodies of the seven monks abducted on 26 March have been found. The statement added that the bodies were found a few kilometers from the city of Medea.

The statement added that before this abominable assassination, the Interior Ministry very strongly condemned this criminal bestial act, which can only evoke the indignation and condemnation of all Algerians.

Algeria: Final Joint Statement on Algerian-Jordanian Talks

LD3105083796 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 2200 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The visit of the Jordanian delegation, headed by 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti, who is the prime, foreign affairs, and defense minister in the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan, to our country has been crowned by the issuing of a joint press statement. Ahmed Chermati reviews the content of the statement:

[Chermati] In the joint statement, the heads of the two countries delegations expressed their satisfaction with the standard that characterizes relations between the two fraternal countries at all levels which are bound to contribute to strengthen cooperation and stability in the region.

Within this framework, an agreement was signed for the creation of a joint committee between the government of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria and the government of the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan, and another statement for media cooperation between the governments of the two countries.

It was also agreed to bolster bilateral relations between the two countries through the exchange of official visits of delegations and officials who particularly represent the sectors of health, higher education, economy and trade, and economic working groups. The two sides also agreed on working toward strengthening and promoting political and diplomatic consultation between the two countries, and benefiting from the two countries' experiences and expertise in the spheres of economic reforms, privatization, and parliamentary work.

The heads of the two countries' delegations stressed the importance of a continued consultation and coordination between the two countries at all levels for being a necessity imposed by the requirements of common Arab action, regional developments, and the current international situation.

Concerning the peace process in the Middle East region, the delegations of the two countries affirmed their support for the exerted efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive, and permanent peace in the region in implementation of the relevant international legitimacy resolutions and the principle of land for peace for achieving Israel's complete withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Arab Golan Heights and south Lebanon and [giving the opportunity] to the brotherly Palestinian people to exercise their rights to self-determination and the establishment of their independent state with holy Jerusalem as its capital.

The two countries' delegations also expressed their satisfaction at the international community's increased awareness of the need to combat terrorism in all its forms as an international phenomenon. They expressed their satisfaction for the level of their people's awareness and rejection of violence and exposing those who hide behind religion to kill the innocent and attempt to halt development and progress.

The two sides also renewed their support for the exerted efforts to reach a peaceful settlement to the Lockerbie crisis within the framework of respecting Libya's national sovereignty and the principles of international law.

The two sides also expressed their satisfaction at the "oil-for-food" agreement reached between Iraq and the United Nations. They expressed their hope that it would contribute toward the lifting of the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq.

Algeria: Jordanian Prime Minister Comments on Meeting With Zeroual

LD3005200496 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1830 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President of the Republic Liamine Zeroual received today at the Presidency Jordanian Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti.

Following the private meeting, the Jordanian prime minister made the following statement:

[Begin Kabariti recording] The accompanying Jordanian delegation and I were honored to meet His Excellency President Liamine Zeroual, and I conveyed to him a message from his brother His Majesty King Husayn. It is a message that is connected with Jordan's stance toward its relations with Algeria. It is a stance supporting and backing the Algerian state and the orientations of his brother President Liamine Zeroual. In fact, we are certain that these orientations will carry Algeria to safe ground and achieve the desired goals so that Algeria becomes the state that, whenever its name is mentioned in the Arab East, gives rise to pride and glory and all feelings of dignity and pride for its historical account in the conscience of Arab citizens.

We have certainly discussed the totality of the Arab and regional situation. I feel that there is complete conformity between the Algerian and Jordanian points of view toward all Arab issues, particularly the need to build bridges of cooperation and solidarity between Arab countries. [end recording]

Algeria: Jordanian Prime Minister Comments on Algeria, Gulf, Israel

LD3005212796 Algiers ENTV Television Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Following his reception by the president of the republic, Jordanian Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti, held a news conference at Djenane El Mithak in which he dealt with a number of issues connected with Algerian-Jordanian cooperation. During this news conference, he also answered journalists' questions on regional Arab and international issues. Zouheir Yacini:

[Yacini] Throughout his interventions in this news conference, the Jordanian prime minister said that the talks he held with Algerian officials will allow for the building of a strong edifice between the two countries in the future, praising by that Algeria's role and status in defending Arab issues. [passage omitted]

Regarding the Middle East, and in an answer on the effects of the Israeli elections and the possibility of a Likud win and its effect on Jordanian-Israeli relations, the prime minister believed that it would not have any effect on the agreements, because the peace process is continuing, even if it takes different forms.

Concerning Jordan's stance toward the Israeli nuclear weapon and its effects on the peace process in the region, he said that Jordan has asked for all nuclear programs to be put under UN supervision to limit their proliferation, and asked Arab countries to support Jordan's position.

In the coming decade, the Gulf region will encounter a water shortage problem. Concerning the adopted measures, 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti said that the situation requires a definition of a regional program to confront this shortage — a matter that requires the unification of the efforts of all the countries of the region.

Egypt

Egypt: Commentary Calls For 'Clearer, More Decisive' Israeli Stand

NC3005141696 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1140 GMT 30 May 96

[Commentary by Muhammad Sharaf: "There Is No Room for Bypassing the Principles of the Peace Process Following the Israeli Elections"]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Husni Mubarak was clear and precise on the issue of the Israeli elections held yesterday, before their results were announced. Speaking at the news conference he held with Libyan Revolution Leader Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi yesterday, President Mubarak said that we do not interfere in Israel's internal affairs, and expressed the hope that the Israeli people would elect the person they think will best serve their interests. He stressed that peace is the objective of everyone. He also underlined an important fact, namely that we will deal with the incoming Israeli prime minister as much as he shows flexibility.

The basic truism in the peace process between the Arab countries and Israel is a constant one, and has been so before the Israeli elections and will remain so after them. By this we mean that there is no alternative to peace in the region, if we want to achieve real and permanent stability and security. There is also another constant and known truism, namely that the remaining peace problems and issues on the Palestinian and Syrian tracks are very complicated ones. The margin for maneuvering before the new Israeli Government, regardless of which party forms it, is very narrow if not nonexistent. By this we mean, for example, that there is no room for bypassing the implementation of the principle of full withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories. There is no room for attempting to bypass the Palestinian people's right to self-determination or to impose conditions that infringe on the Arabs' legitimate rights in return for withdrawal. Wasting time on such futile maneuvers will only give the enemies of peace the opportunity to harm the peace process.

As the actual political stand in Israel following the elections has not yet become clear, it must be noted that Egypt is devoting all its efforts and diplomatic action to resuming the peace process. While the Israeli side probably needs some time to catch its breath and arrange its cards following the elections, Egypt has achieved a lot in preparing the Arab side to resume the negotiations. The Egyptian-Jordanian-Palestinian tripartite summit to be held in the coming few days will put the final touches on preparations to start the next stage in the peace process.

A known fact, even before the Israeli elections, is that the two main parties' stands on the peace process principles have many aspects that could constitute real obstacles in the peace negotiations if they are not rectified. This situation remains the same, even after the elections.

While events and developments will take their course, it is still important to underline some important facts relating to the situation in the region. The first of these facts is that the position of the fanatics and extremists from both sides has not been resolved. They must be forced to face a fait accompli by speeding up the peace process and making it attain its objectives.

We can say with almost certainty that developments and violence in the previous peace stages, since the process started, were the consequences of two basic factors. The first was the slow tempo of the peace process and the second was the Israeli negotiating officials' hesitation to take firm stands, because they lacked knowledge of the main views of the Israeli public.

The Israeli stands should be clearer and more decisive in order not to waste any time and to make the situation clearer, thus enabling the peoples of the region to perceive their path.

Morocco

Morocco: Agreement Signed on Economic Cooperation With Iraq

LD3005160196 Casablanca AL-SAHARA AL-MAGHRIBIYAH in Arabic 25 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report: "Morocco-Iraq: The Signing of a Cooperation and Exchange Program — Includes Supplying Baghdad With Food, Medicine, and Credit Facilities"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Iraq and Morocco on 23 May signed the minutes of an agreement on cooperation and joint trade, economic, and financial exchanges.

The minutes included supplying Iraq with food and medicine, the granting of credit facilities and intensifying trade exchanges between the union of chambers of commerce and industry, and in the fields of agriculture, health, irrigation, transport, communications, housing, and construction.

The minutes were signed for the Iraqi side by Hatim Abd Husayn, undersecretary at the ministry of trade, and for the Moroccan side by Ambassador Boubaker Mansouri, head of the Maghreb department at the ministry of foreign affairs and cooperation. [passage omitted]

Morocco: Major Labor Unions Call 'General Strike' for 5 Jun

LD3005145496 Rabat MAP in English 1300 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Rabat, May 30 (MAP) — Two labor unions close to the opposition in Morocco on Wednesday [29 May] called for a 24-hour "preventive" general strike next June 5, a joint communique said.

The Confederation Democratique du Travail (CDT) and the Union Generale des Travailleurs du Maroc (UGTM) called their militants to observe this movement in protest against what they describe as the deterioration of the social condition of workers and the refusal of the government to meet their demands.

The two unions blame the government and the employers for rejecting continuously any "earnest and responsible" dialogue. They claim a general salary increase, namely the guaranteed minimum wage, fixed in 1992 to about 1,500 dirhams (less than 200 dollars), and the reintegration of the lay offs fired for their activism.

The call for the general strike came few hours after the announcement by Prime Minister Abdellatif Filali of the opening of dialogue by the [words indistinct] week with trade unions. On Monday [27 May], the Minister of State for the Interior, Driss Basri, told the parliament that the Moroccan Government is willing to initiate as of June 10 a large-scale and open dialogue with all trade unions.

The home minister recalled the promise made by the government to start as of Thursday a dialogue with the social partners with the aim to examine the labor's moral, material and legislative claims.

Driss Basri insisted on what he described as the "transparent and clear policy" pursued [words indistinct] policy which is, he said, based on the normalization of the political, economic, and social life, and on equity.

On their part, two agricultural unions, the Federation Nationale de l'Agriculture (FNA) and the Syndicat National des Agriculteurs (SNA), last Friday [24 May] announced their decision to stage a general strike but did not set dates. These two labor unions protest tax levying, price increase, deterioration of purchasing power etc.

Sudan

Sudan: Joint Committee With Libya Signs Final Communique

EA3005161896 Khartoum SUNA in English 1025 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Khartoum, 30 May (SUNA) — The final communique of the Joint Foreign Relations

Sudanese-Libyan Committee was signed Wednesday [29 May] at the Foreign Relations Ministry here. The signatories to the document were state minister at the Foreign Relations Ministry Dr. Mustafa 'Uthman Isma'il, head of the Sudanese side, and Sulayman al-Shahumi head of the Libyan side.

Dr. Isma'il expressed Sudan Government's appreciation to the Libyan leaders for their support to Sudan's case in facing conspiracies. The coercive measures imposed against the two peoples by the new world order were in retaliation against Sudan's independent stance, Dr. Isma'il said. He further noted that the present Arab situation calls for integration between Arab and Muslim nations to counter common challenges.

On his part, head of the Libyan side called for an urgent Arab summit meeting to invigorate the Arab League Charter. Libya has expressed appreciation to the serious efforts paid by the Sudanese Government to reach peace in the country, al-Shahumi said. He further described the joint committee meetings as open and frank and that agreement was reached on several joint issues in the process of integration between the two countries, which he described as a strategic option.

Sudan: Paper—U.S. Plans To Reshape Horn of Africa, Divide Sudan

NC3005142396 Cairo AL-SHA'B in Arabic 24 May 96 p 1

[Report by Mahmud Bakri]

[FBIS Translated Text] The United States is preparing, in total secrecy, a dangerous scheme to redraw the map of the Horn of Africa and partition the countries there, particularly Sudan, in order to stem the rise of Islamic groups in the region.

The dangerous scheme provides for the partition of Sudan into several parts and the establishment of two states in the Horn of Africa that will be strategically and totally dependent on the United States. They will constitute the basic regional stepping stone to confront any political instability and the growing power of the Islamic groups.

The scheme calls for the establishment of two federations. The first would comprise Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, and eastern Sudan and would aim to establish a strategic balance in the Red Sea. It would be linked strategically and militarily with the United States and Israel, would receive economic assistance, and would involve the establishment of an extensive free trade zone. It would be necessary, according to this scheme, to consult with the African tribes in the constituent countries to guarantee the success of the planned economic and security cooperation.

The second federal state would include Uganda, Zaire, Chad, and the southern and western parts of Sudan.

The United States hopes that Egypt, in light of its current tense relations with Sudan, will agree to annex northern Sudan. This is designed to overcome any Egyptian opposition to Sudan's partition.

According to the scheme, Sudan will disappear from the map as a unitary state. The people who are drawing up the scheme believe that the various Sudanese tribes might accept a three-way partition of the country.

According to information, the U.S. Administration and Israel aim to exert direct control over the approaches to the African continent and the Red Sea. They plan to play a strategic role in the Mediterranean by overthrowing the regime of Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi, leader of the Libyan revolution, and later to establish strategic security relations between Libya and Chad.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Administration is continuing its plans for a military strike against the Libyan Jamahiriyah and for this reason has contacted the Egyptian Government several times, offering to begin discussing the issue of Israeli nuclear weapons in the context of Israeli-U.S.-Egyptian negotiations starting early next year, after the U.S. and Israeli elections. In return, Egypt would provide every possible assistance to eliminate Libya's weapons of mass destruction program, particularly the chemical plant which the United States alleges is located in the Libyan Jamahiriyah.

The U.S. Administration has presented to Egypt 18 new documents about the Libyan chemical factory, claiming that they come from the heart of the Libyan plant and consist of photographs that were not taken by satellite but through the efforts of special U.S. agencies.

Western Sahara

Western Sahara: Polisario Vows To Defend Right To Self-Determination

LD3005202196 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Announcer] The UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1056. [passage omitted] Following this, the Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saquia El Hamra and Rio de Oro] has renewed its intent to defend, with all means, the right of Saharan people to self-determination and independence. It has also stressed its readiness to give all chances for a just and peaceful solution. We go to our correspondent Souad.

[Souad] Ahmed Boukhari, Polisario representative to the United Nations, has stressed that it remains supportive of any credible, responsible, and unbiased political effort. Yet, it will never accept the continuation of the de facto colonization through a status quo, which Morocco seeks to maintain by means of a cease-fire without any political prospects under the supervision of the United Nations.

The Polisario pointed out that through this resolution the Security Council reaffirms its commitment to continue efforts for the organization of a free, just, and unbiased referendum for the Saharan people, as per the settlement plan that was accepted by both sides.

The Security Council, after identifying the party responsible for the obstruction of the peace march, is giving a new deadline for political initiatives to remove all that can prevent the holding of the referendum.

[Announcer] Hasiba Sad telephoned His Excellency Boubehi Salek, ambassador of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic to Algeria. She asked him about the consequences of this resolution on peace in the Western Sahara. He answered:

[Begin Salek recording] Indeed the Security Council adopted yesterday a resolution on the Western Sahara. [passage omitted]

As for the Saharan people, while the Popular Front expresses its readiness to give all chances to finding a just and peaceful solution, it stresses its commitment to defend, by all means, the right of the Saharan people to self-determination and independence. Within this context the Polisario will never accept the imposition of the de facto colonialist status quo, which Morocco wants to maintain. Any way, the coming weeks will show the seriousness, or lack of it, of the search for a solution to the problems that are obstructing the implementation of the United Nations' peace plan. This is what will show the development of coming events: Are they moving toward peace or war. [end recording]

Bahrain

Bahrain: Chairman of U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Departs

JN3005133096 Manama WAKH in Arabic 0950 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Manama, 30 May (WAKH)—General John Shalikashvili, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, left Manama this morning after a two-day visit to Bahrain.

During the visit, he held talks on enhancing relations and bilateral cooperation between the two friendly countries. The talks also dealt with the latest regional and international developments.

Gen. Shalikashvili said that his visit to Bahrain was extremely successful. He expressed thanks and appreciation to their highnesses the amir, the prime minister, the heir apparent, and the defense minister for their warm reception.

He added that his meetings with the Bahraini officials were cordial, useful, and extremely fruitful, exactly how meetings among old friends and peace partners should be.

Gen. Shalikashvili asserted that the relationship between Bahrain and the United States is always excellent. He expected the friendship between the two governments to grow and become stronger in the coming years, in view of the joint action carried out by the two friendly countries to serve regional security and stability.

He reiterated U.S. support for the Bahraini Government and its policy on enhancing security in the region and in Bahrain, as well as U.S. support for the Bahraini Government's wise policies regarding the homeland's progress and unity.

Gen. Shalikashvili said that upon his return to Washington, he will brief U.S. President Bill Clinton and the members of Congress on the results of his visit to Bahrain and the region and that he will inform them that Bahraini-U.S. relations are now stronger than before.

He was seen off at the airport by Staff Major General Shaykh 'Abdallah Bin-Salman Al Khalifah, chief of staff of the Defense Force; David Ransom, U.S. ambassador to Bahrain; some senior Defense Force officers; and the U.S. Embassy staff in Bahrain.

Kuwait

Kuwait: Minister Comments on Plans To Increase Oil Production

JN3105053996 Kuwait KUWAIT TIMES in English 20 May 96 p 1

[Report by Sabrine Hassan]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kuwait: Stressing that "raising oil outputs by mid-1996 is our aim", Minister of Oil 'Abd-al-Muhsin al-Mid'aj told KUWAIT TIMES that profits come from the increase in refinery margins.

The minister was referring to the ministry's plans to raise domestic refinery capacity to one million barrels per day (bpd) from the 839,000 bpd current production. Al-Mida'j was speaking during his visit to the Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research's (KISR) Centre for Soil and Oil Sludge Remediation in the Burgan Oil fields on Tuesday [28 May] last.

Thus, refining will exceed pre-invasion capacity by 55,000 bpd before the end of this year, he stressed. Kuwait capacity's from three refineries ranges between 875,000 and 890,000 bpd, and "the next step will be one million bpd".

The Kuwait National Petroleum Corporation (KNPC) is highly sophisticated in its refining capacity programme and envisages an expansion to a maximum of one million bpd, al-Mid'aj explained.

KNPC will make huge profits in 1995-96, equal to record earnings in June, 1995 due to improved refinery margins, which are an important factor in the strong post-Gulf War oil recovery.

Higher oil prices, repairs to war damages and more sales of refined products are behind the good health of the Kuwaiti oil sector. Mina 'Abdallah's capacity of 255,000 bpd has just been restored to pre-invasion capacity.

"The output of Mina 'Abdallah refinery ranges between 250,000 and 260,000 bpd," Jamal al-Kusaymi, the plant's superintendent for operational planning, explained. Talking about how the problems were surmounted, al-Kusaymi highlighted the efforts of engineers who successfully reviewed the original design and documented future plans in order to restore normal rates of crude feed. Emphasising the efforts, al-Kusaymi said it took nine months to surmount the major obstacles in the central room, which was blown up by the Iraqis and which had paralysed the refinery's internal system.

"We utilised our old pumps from the 1950s to be able to reconnect the refinery with our main sources," he added.

The restoration was to improve the rate and maximise our production if we add initiatives to projects for a better processing of the crude, he added.

The next challenge after restoration of Mina 'Abdallah is to strengthen productivity through fast-growing Asian economies which have become a major market for our refined products and liquid petroleum gas, he stressed.

Referring to the protection of the environment, al-Khusaymi said Mina 'Abdallah has based its refining process along international guidelines, abiding that sulphur proportions in oil products do not exceed five per cent.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia: 4 Executed for 95 Bombing of U.S. Facility

LD3105132796 Riyadh SPA in Arabic
1137 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Riyadh, 31 May (SPA) — The Interior Ministry issued the following statement today:

Statement from the Interior Ministry: In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. Thanks be to God of all the universe, and the end is best for the righteous and the round of evil is on the aggressors who corrupt on Earth. [passage omitted]

On Monday 20 Jumada al-Thaniyah 1416H [corresponding to 13 November 1995] the following Saudi nationals —

1. 'Abd al-'Aziz Bin Fahd Bin Nasir al-Mu'thim
2. Khalid Bin Ahmad Bin Ibrahim al-Sa'id
3. Riyad Bin Sulayman Bin Ishaq al-Hajiri
4. Muslih Bin 'Ali Bin 'A'id al-Shamrani — exploded a Mitsubishi pickup truck at al-'Ulayya district in the city of Riyadh.

His Royal Highness [HRH] the interior minister announced on Monday 4 Dhu al-Hijjah 1416H [21 May 1996] the arrests of these culprits and their subsequent confessions [taped] in audio and video.

Details of their confessions, which were handwritten by them, were documented and read out by them before three judges from the Supreme Sharia Court in Jeddah. The judges documented their confessions and schemes, which preceded the carrying out of this grave crime, which led to the deaths of seven innocent people and over sixty people receiving different injuries and deformations.

As a result of this bombing, a number of houses and shops in the blast zone were destroyed. The explosion also led to the destruction of a number of cars and panic in this district and the vicinity.

When referred to the Supreme Court in Riyadh to rule on their case, three judges passed a verdict ruling on the truth of what was attributed to them in their confessions, namely that they had planned this crime for a long time after they had failed to commit crimes of kidnapping and assassination, which they detailed before the judges.

The judges have concluded that the abovementioned carried out a heinous crime, involving the murder of innocent people, the wasting of money, causing panic and fear among citizens and residents, and a sign of evil.

The Sharia came to protect the nation and its five fundamentals tenets: religion, life, honor, reason, and money. The deeds of these corrupters were against these fundamental tenets and was threatening to them. The crime they committed agrees with the verse: "The punishment of those who wage war against God and His Apostle, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution."

The judges, examining the case, have concluded that the abovementioned criminals be executed as a punishment for the abominable crime they committed.

The sentence was endorsed by five judges from the Court of Cassation and was also supported and endorsed by the Supreme Judicial Council.

Decree number 628 dated 10 Muharram 1417H [corresponding to 27 May 96] was issued to execute the ruling against the abovementioned.

Today, Friday, 14 Muharram 1417H [31 May 96], the four criminals were executed in Riyadh. [passage omitted]

Saudi Arabia: Chinese Defense Minister Praises Ties With Riyadh

LD3005145696 Riyadh SPA in Arabic
1332 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Jeddah, 30 May (SPA) — General Chi Haotian, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, member of the State Council, and defense minister in the People's Republic of China, who is on a visit to the kingdom, has expressed his own pleasure and that of his accompanying delegation at his presence in the kingdom. He also praised the continued development in Saudi-Chinese relations.

In a statement to SPA, he said the Chinese Government was extremely eager to promote friendship and cordial relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

He said his visit to the kingdom was aimed at strengthening understanding, deepening friendship, and boosting cooperation between the two countries. He expressed his confidence that his visit would contribute toward further growth in the existing amicable ties between the two friendly peoples.

Saudi Arabia: Foreign Minister Interviewed on Peace Process, Japan

LD3005173996 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 2359 GMT 29 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Tokyo, 29 May (SPA) — His Royal Highness Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal, foreign minister, stressed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has contributed effectively to the peace negotiations in the Middle East.

His highness said: We are a country that has contributed effectively to the peace negotiations since they started. Even before the Madrid conference, there was the King Fahd peace plan, which set out principles and defined an Arab stance built on the basis of principles approved later in the Madrid conference.

That came in a newspaper interview conducted by the Japanese newspaper YOMIURI with His Royal Highness Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal in today's issue.

Regarding the Arab oil company, his highness said that the Arab oil company was the first sphere for cooperation between the two countries. [passage omitted]

He pointed out that in the sphere of trade, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia provided one quarter of Japan's oil and about 43 percent of its gas. Thus, the search process in the commercial sphere was important in itself. [passage omitted]

Regarding the content of the forthcoming agreement from the viewpoint of its duration and his highness's conception of the oil refining company, whose establishment the custodian of the two holy mosques [King Fahd] had called for, his highness said: We are enthusiastic about the establishment of a refinery or participation in the establishment of a refinery between Japan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, because, first, I have mentioned that the level of cooperation, particularly in the sphere of energy and oil, between the two countries is very large and I believe that it should not be restricted to supplying oil and gas, but also to the framework of refining and products. This conforms with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's policy in expanding its industrial oil base, and I believe it is of a common interest. [passage omitted]

Concerning relations between the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] and Iran, his highness said that "Iran is an important country in the Arabian Gulf and we hope that the GCC countries' relations with Iran are generally excellent and distinguished. The important thing in this framework is the axis and not the countries' policy toward Iran, as much as Iran's policy toward its neighboring countries."

His highness expressed his hope that Iran's policy toward the Gulf Cooperation Council states was based on cooperation, good neighborliness, noninterference in internal affairs, absence of threats, and commitment to equal status in cooperation.

He stressed that the GCC had stated in a way that left no room for doubt that it was eager to develop those relations.

His highness added: "There are problems. The most prominent is the problem between the United Arab Emirates and Iran over the Emirates' three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa. The UAE has stated that it is endeavoring to find a peaceful solution based on negotiations or international arbitration either by the International Court of Justice or another body as a way of solving the issue. It has invited Iran to negotiations within that framework. However, regrettably — and we say this with the full meaning of the word — Iran has not responded favorably to that generous invitation by UAE President Shaykh Zayid Bin-Sultan."

He went on to say: "In addition to that, there are other countries with which we would like to have relations based on good neighborliness and noninterference in internal affairs."

He stressed that relations between the region's states and Iran had to be based on mutual interests and nothing else. He said: "There are many mutual interests, such as neighborliness. Furthermore, our economies are similar and there are historical ties between the Iranian people, Arab people, and the Arabian Gulf region. There are firm bases for establishing relations that are not just excellent, but distinctive."

His highness said: "If we could focus on this, we would be able to build sound relations between Iran and the Arabian Gulf states, which is what we wish."

Regarding his appreciation of Japan's policy toward Iran, His Highness Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal said: "Independent states have their own policy toward other states which they might change. However, our region is very sensitive and, regrettably, the threat to the Arabian Gulf region in particular does not come from outside but from within the Arabian Gulf region." [passage omitted]

His highness said: "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports the agreement reached between the United Nations and Iraq. I hope that the humanitarian aspect of this issue will be resolved now that the Iraqi Government has accepted UN Security Council Resolution 986, which deals with humanitarian issues. [passage omitted]

Regarding the Sultanate of Oman and Qatar's decision to establish relations with Israel, his highness said: "That recognition is a part of sovereign rights. While bound by specific relations and the GCC Charter, the GCC states remain independent and sovereign, and they do not necessarily follow identical policies when it comes to recognizing other states."

On whether Saudi Arabia would establish relations with Israel, his highness said: "In our view the important thing is to establish security and stability in the region through a comprehensive, just, and durable peace to include all states and peoples of the region. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had effectively contributed to the peace negotiations since their beginning and even before Madrid conference."

His highness added: "There was the King Fahd peace plan, which laid down rules and defined an Arab position based on the principles that were approved at the Madrid conference, namely the unacceptability of the occupation of land by force and the land-for-peace principle."

He stressed that our conviction in peace and the necessity and inevitability of peace could not be doubted. We are for peace, "the peace which is based on international legitimacy, for the resolutions of the Security Council, and basically for the resolutions of Madrid."

His highness added: "From this standpoint, and while I am expressing our commitment to these principles, I am also expressing our concern over Israeli practices from two fundamental aspects. First, the way in which Israel is dealing with the Palestinian issue; the method of collective punishment and closure of the borders, which has a negative effect on the peace process."

His highness expressed the hope that the Palestinian-Israeli agreement on the transitional period would be fully and sincerely implemented by both sides. "We are sure of the Palestinians' resolve to shoulder their responsibility in implementing this agreement," he added.

Second, his highness added, "is the need to speed up the steps for the final settlement, which will lead to security and peace in the region. There are the Syrian and the Lebanese tracks that have gone into limbo. We also have seen the method of collective punishment applied against Lebanon and the catastrophes that resulted from the indiscriminate Israeli shelling of the south of Lebanon, rather the whole of Lebanon, under the pretext of ensuring Israel's security."

He added: "All these factors concern us and are a source of worry to us, because the peace process is being threatened. However, we hope that it will continue. We hope that the mediator that is acceptable to both side, namely the United States, will continue its role in bringing stances closer. This applies equally to the Syrian and Lebanese-Israeli talks, the implementation of the transitional phase, and dealing with the final phase of the Palestinian-Israeli talks.

His highness stressed that the peace process had suffered hitches due to the collective punishment dealt by Israel to Palestinians, and the adventurism and shelling perpetrated in Lebanon.

He said: "On the basis of all that, we have called for the reconvening of the Madrid conference so that the peace process will move forward on the basis on which the Madrid conference was built." [passage omitted]

On the U.S. reaction to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's proposal for the convening of another Madrid conference, his highness the foreign minister said: "We submitted the proposal on behalf of King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, at the Sharm al-Shaykh meeting and did not sense a negative reaction in that framework. We hope that it will be given the consideration it deserves. We are convinced that it is the appropriate means to refocus the peace process on the bases it was built."

Concerning the nomination of Japan for a permanent membership in the Security Council, his highness said: "Japan has played a pivotal and extremely important role on both the political and the economic fields." He went on to say: "The question is twofold. One concerns Japan's membership in the Security Council, and we welcome this membership. The second concerns the current reforms within the United Nations and the Security Council." [passage omitted]

His highness added: "As for Japan's right to membership in the Security Council, we see that it and the factors that dictate this also exist — due to the international size of Japan in the political and the economic arenas. There is also the security element, and we are aware of the debate going on in Japan about the security responsibilities of Japan in the international field. However, this subject concerns Japan itself and falls within the tasks of permanent membership in the Security Council."

United Arab Emirates

UAE: Diplomatic Ties Established With Macedonia

JN3005172496 Dubayy AL-BAYAN in Arabic 28 May 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Governments of the United Arab Emirates [UAE] and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia decided to establish diplomatic ties between them on the ambassadorial level as of yesterday, 27 May 1996.

A statement issued yesterday in both Abu Dhabi and Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, said that their decision to establish diplomatic ties reflects their joint desire to promote their bilateral ties of friendship and cooperation. [passage omitted]

Yemen

Yemen: President Says 4 New Governorates To Be Established

JN3005150396 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Lieutenant General President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih attended a speech and youth rally at the War College today. The rally was organized by Sanaa Governorate on the occasion of the celebrations of the sixth anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Yemen.

The president gave a speech at the rally in which he thanked the governorate's officials for organizing the rally and the presentations by all the directorates of Sanaa Governorate. He noted that the government cares about Sanaa Governorate, as it does the other governorates.

The president said that the higher commission on administrative division reorganization is about to complete the task of reorganizing the Republic of Yemen's administrative divisions. He added that four new governorates will be established: 'Amran, Saywun, Zabib, and al-Dali'. The president also discussed a number of local and regional issues.

Iraq: Oil Minister's Comments at News Conference Reported

JN3005121196 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1020 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 30 May (INA)—Iraq today started loading the Turkish section of the Iraqi-Turkish oil pipeline in preparation for resuming Iraqi oil exports to world markets in mid-June. This was announced by Lieutenant General Engineer 'Amir Muhammad Rashid, the oil minister, during a news conference he held this morning at the Oil Ministry.

He said: The loading of the Turkish section requires three to five days. The process aims to test the pipeline and to restore pressure inside it. Iraq already finished loading the Iraqi section of the pipeline and raised pressure inside it to a high degree.

He added: Iraq will resume oil exports via al-Bakr Port on the Arabian Gulf and the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean at a rate of 800,000 barrels a day. Between 440,000 and 450,000 barrels a day will be exported via Ceyhan Port and 330,000 barrels a day will be exported via al-Bakr Port.

The oil minister said the inspectors, appointed by the UN secretary general, are expected to arrive in al-Bakr Port within a week to supervise the practical implementation of contracts Iraq will sign with foreign companies, especially in terms of the supplied quantity and quality.

Oil Minister Lt. Gen. 'Amir Muhammad Rashid said Iraq contacted 56 international firms to inquire about their needs for Iraqi oil and so far received replies from 20 to 30 international companies. He said Iraq is currently studying the requests of these companies in accordance with its priorities. These priorities include dealing with international companies with sound financial bases and those from friendly states which had positive stands regarding the Iraqi people's suffering from the unfair embargo.

He said that Iraq completed all preparations to resume oil exports via al-Bakr Port, which now has an export capacity of 1.3 million barrels a day. This capacity, he said, will be raised to 1.6 million barrels a day in the next few weeks.

The oil minister said that Iraq finished loading the 40 km-long pipeline which extends to al-Bakr port after raising pressure inside it several weeks ago. Iraq, he said, is now ready to receive oil tankers and load them immediately.

The oil minister announced that Iraq will participate in OPEC's regular session, scheduled to convene in Vienna on 5 June. He said that during that meeting, Iraq will underline its adherence to its quota which was decided by OPEC in July 1990.

He stressed that Iraq wants to preserve OPEC unity's and its members' compliance with the set quota and to ensure that none of the member states will be harmed. This position, he said, is based on Iraq's ceaseless endeavor to ensure that there is no chaos in the oil market and on its responsibility toward stability in the world oil market.

The oil minister said that the Iraqi dinar will be clearly resuscitated as soon as Iraq begins exporting its oil in accordance with the Iraq-UN memorandum of understanding signed on 20 May. He added that the Iraqi dinar's strength is based on Iraq's large crude oil reserves, estimated at 112 billion barrels as confirmed reserves and 214 billion barrels as probable reserves, in addition to Iraq's natural and human resources which are run by a wise leadership represented by President Saddam Husayn.

The minister noted that Iraq possesses a great amount of natural gas which is enough to meet the needs of the region and Europe. He said that Iraq held talks with Turkey for the possible establishment of a pipeline to transfer gas from Iraq to Turkey and link it with the European gas network. Iraq, he added, is prepared to allow gas pipelines of sisterly and friendly countries through its territory if these countries so desire.

The minister pointed out the growth in Iraq's economy has taken shape and borne fruit since President Saddam Husayn assumed the post of the prime minister on 29 May 1994. With his well-known wisdom, the president was able to combine the collective democratic work with an effective leadership to draw up a comprehensive economic strategy and overcoming the difficult circumstances of the blockade. This was embodied in his letter to the cabinet dated 2 December 1995, which contributed to improving the Iraqi economy and realizing positive results that reflected the economic conditions of the Iraqis and improved the value of the Iraqi dinar.

The minister emphasized that the memorandum of understanding reached between Iraq and the United Nations on selling limited amounts of oil in exchange for food and medicine and some basic needs does not mean that Iraq has renounced its demand for implementing Paragraph 22 of Resolution 687 as a prelude to lifting the unjust embargo imposed on the Iraqi people, noting that Iraq met its commitments toward the UN Security Council resolutions.

The minister spoke about cooperation between Iraq and Jordan in the field of oil, asserting that Iraq will continue to meet sisterly Jordan's needs of oil and oil byproducts in a better way than what has been agreed upon, and will extend expertise to the Jordanian brothers to develop their oil capabilities and oil-related projects.

Iraq: Al-Samarra'i Notes Syria's 'Importance' in Iraqi 'Change'

MM3005104796 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 30 May 96 p 4

[Report by Ibrahim Humaydi in Damascus and Salamah Ni'mat in Amman: "Al-Samarra'i Tells AL-HAYAH: To Ignore Syria's Importance Is Not in Our Interest"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Informed sources have told AL-HAYAH that Staff Major General Wafiq al-Samarra'i, former Iraqi military intelligence chief, left Amman and returned to Damascus last Sunday [26 May] evening. The sources added that, while in Amman, al-Samarra'i was in "direct and constant contact" with Syrian officials. He [al-Samarra'i] told AL-HAYAH: "An approach which would ignore Syria's importance with regard to change in the Iraqi people's interest is neither in our interest nor in the region's interest."

Al-Samarra'i left for Jordan last April and denied statements by Jordanian sources to the effect that his defection to Jordan was caused by the "restrictions" imposed by the Syrian Government on his activities. At the time, he told AL-HAYAH that Syria "has given me many facilities and provided me with opportunities to contact the foreign media." He stressed that he would return to Damascus and praised the Syrian position. The sources pointed to al-Samarra'i's keenness "to praise the Syrian role, in his statements to the media."

The sources close to the former Iraqi intelligence chief said that, while in Amman, "he did not meet" with [former Iraqi Chief of Staff] General Nizar al-Khazraji and that "he is not prepared to move away from Syria, and was constantly and directly in contact with it during his absence." Maj. Gen. al-Samarra'i told AL-HAYAH in Damascus: "We hope that all the arenas around Iraq will be open to us. It is important that everyone should realize that we are aware of Syria's importance in the change for the Iraqi people's interest. Any other approach is neither in our interest nor in the region's interest." After stressing that he had not interrupted contacts with the interior [Iraq] "for a single week since my departure" from Iraq at the end of 1994, he said that "the correct implementation of the oil-for-food resolution serves only the interests of the Iraqi people, and there are clear indications of the Baghdad regime's disappointment with the initial results of the resolution, since the dinar exchange rate has fallen. Also, the newspaper BABIL (belonging to President Saddam Husayn's son 'Udayy) has attacked the ministers who ratified Resolution 986." Meanwhile, an official Jordanian source in Amman denied yesterday that there are any government measures against Iraqi opposition following Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti's last week meeting with Nuri Isma'il al-Ways, the Iraqi ambassador in Amman.

The Jordanian official stressed to AL-HAYAH that Jordan's position toward the Iraqi regime has not changed and that "there has been no development requiring us to change our position which calls for rescuing the Iraqi people from their plight caused by the external blockade and internal oppression."

He said that al-Kabariti's visit to the Iraqi ambassador was to inquire about his health after he underwent successful surgery, and stressed that it was a courtesy visit, which did not deal with any political issues concerning bilateral relations.

On reports of al-Samarra'i's return to Damascus after his decision to move to Amman last month, the source said that al-Samarra'i "was granted a decision allowing him to stay in Amman at his request, and there are no restrictions on his movements to and from Jordan." He explained that "al-Samarra'i's visit to Damascus may have something to do with the fact that members of his family, who were unable to leave Damascus with him, are there."

Iraq: Second Round of Local Elections Begins

JN3105092896 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0840 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 31 May (INA)—Iraqis will head to the polls today to elect their representatives to the local councils of the governorates and Baghdad. Voters elected their representatives to the district and subdistrict councils yesterday.

In this democratic exercise, the first of its kind in Iraq, Iraqis will elect 4,711 representatives out of 6,106 candidates to the local people's councils.

These elections are the third democratic exercise in Iraq in the last eight months. It was preceded by the Great March Day [the presidential referendum] and the fourth National Assembly elections. These elections reflect President Saddam Husayn's eagerness to bolster democratic practices, consolidate their objectives, and expand the basis of popular participation through the people's representatives to the authority.

Iraq: Interior Minister Urges Turnout in Local Council Elections

JN3105142296 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1150 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 31 May (INA)—Muhammad Zimam 'Abd-al-Razzaq, minister of interior and chairman of the Higher Committee in Charge of Local People's Council Elections, stated that the local council elections in the city of Baghdad and the governorates are proceeding smoothly and in a free and democratic atmosphere.

While touring several polling stations in the areas of al-Sha'b, al-A'zamiyah, al-Bayya', al-'Amil, and al-Durah in the Baghdad Governorate, the minister familiarized himself with the progress of voting. He said that these elections are the third democratic exercise seen in Iraq during the past eight months after the general popular referendum of 15 October 1995 and the fourth National Assembly elections.

The minister stressed the need for citizens to cast their votes in complete freedom in line with the state's principles and policies regarding the entrenchment of democracy and democratic practice, whose foundations were laid by His Excellency President Saddam Husayn when he broadened the base of popular participation in the decisionmaking process by involving the people's representatives in shouldering greater responsibilities.

Israel: Netanyahu Leading Peres After 99.9 Percent of Votes Counted

TA3005132896 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1300 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Binyamin Netanyahu's lead over Shim'on Peres is now 22,399 votes, our correspondent Ron Nesi'el reports, based on the Central Elections Committee's count of 99.9 percent of the regular votes. Netanyahu received 1,416,280 votes while Peres got 1,394,881 votes.

Israel: Netanyahu Lead Increases to 0.8 Percent; Counting Continues

TA3105073096 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0700 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The counting of the questionable ballot boxes continues in the Knesset, and the counting of the double envelopes has started. Our correspondent Gil Litman reports that after counting 27 out of the 48 questionable ballot boxes, the gap between Binyamin Netanyahu and Shim'on Peres has grown to 0.8 percent or 26,212 votes. Our correspondent notes that the last ballot boxes counted are from Rehovot and Ashqelon. The number of double envelopes to be counted amounts to 140,446. The Central Election Committee hopes to complete the counting before the beginning of the Shabat.

Israel: Final Returns Show Netanyahu With 11.1 Percent Lead in Jewish Sector

TA3005144896 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1435 GMT 30 May 96

[Report by Gil Litman — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] The final returns of the regular ballot boxes, excluding the special ballots which will be counted tomorrow, show that in the Jewish sector Binyamin Netanyahu has a significant lead over Shim'on Peres of 11.1 percent: Netanyahu scored 55.5 percent, while Peres scored 44.4 percent.

Israel: NRP To Propose National Unity Government to Netanyahu

TA3005124596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1200 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] National Religious Party [NRP] Chairman Zvulun Hammer will propose to Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu to set up a national unity government. Hammer told our party affairs correspondent Yaron Deqel that an effort must be made today to consolidate a broad national consensus. [passage omitted]

Israel: Likud Launches Unofficial Contacts With Religious Parties

TA3005182296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1800 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Our correspondent Pe'erli Shahar reports that the meeting of the Likud's steering committee led by Binyamin Netanyahu with Ari'el Sharon, David Levi, Refa'el Eytan, Dan Meridor, and Yitzhaq Mordekhay is over. It was decided to open unofficial contacts with the religious and ultra-Orthodox parties. The contacts will not be conducted by Netanyahu himself, but through his emissaries in the steering committee.

Yitzhaq Mordekhay, the Likud's campaign manager, says the political process will continue but more care will be taken about?ity issue. There will be a dialogue with the Palestinians with the intention of advancing toward the permanent arrangement, he said.

Our correspondent Pe'erli Shahar reports that Netanyahu continues to hold internal consultations with the participation of David Levi, Ari'el Sharon, and Refa'el Eytan.

Israel: Peres Rejects Unity Government; Labor Ministers Differ

TA3105045796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0400 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Our party affairs correspondent reports that Prime Minister Shim'on Peres rejects the possibility of a national unity government headed by Binyamin Netanyahu, but several Labor ministers say that if Labor is given the opportunity to influence the continuation of the political process, it should not reject the possibility of joining a Netanyahu government.

Israel: Baraq Criticizes Ramon's Election Campaign Line

TA3105075096 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 31 May 96 pp A1, A14

[Report by Yerah Tal, Amnon Barzilay, and Hana Kim]

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres affirmed yesterday that he has no intention of joining a national unity government led by Binyamin Netanyahu. Peres told HA'ARETZ: "A unity government — without me."

In talks with associates yesterday Peres asserted that the possibility that he might join a unity government led by the Likud chairman was unrealistic. His close family also expressed its categorical opposition to such an idea.

Nevertheless, his associates did not rule out the possibility that Peres might be put in a situation in which he is forced to respond seriously to a call for a unity government. One associate said Peres might face huge pressure from the secular sector which will ask him to join Netanyahu's government in order to neutralize the ultra-Orthodox sector that is subject to Ari'el Sharon's vast influence.

A group has emerged in Labor that would not categorically reject a national unity government, if Netanyahu were to propose it. The group is headed by Ministers Ehud Baraq, Binyamin Ben-Eli'ezer, and Avraham Shohat. The three met yesterday morning at the Dan Hotel in Tel Aviv and discussed, among other things, the possibility that Labor might be offered to join a unity government. Shohat said they should keep all options open, but proposed to put off a discussion of all these issues until the official returns of the elections are in. Baraq's associates rejected rumors whereby he might quit the Knesset and join a Netanyahu government as defense minister. The associates pointed out that Baraq is not ruling out the possibility that under certain circumstances Labor might join a unity government, but emphasized that he will make no move unless it is approved by Labor.

Avraham Burg intends to propose an amendment to the party's constitution to separate the position of party chairman from that of candidate for the premiership. Peres will summon the Labor ministers next week, apparently to inform them of his political intentions. In the meantime, Peres is maintaining his silence and ordered the ministers to do likewise with regard to the elections, until the final official results are announced.

Associates of Minister Hayim Ramon said yesterday that he does not rule out a national unity government under the Likud chairman. Ramon intends to coordinate his moves with Shim'on Peres. If Peres objects to a national unity government, as he has already made clear, Ramon may join Peres in leading the move within the party against joining a Netanyahu government and perhaps then clash over the issue with Baraq, Ben-Eli'ezer, and Shohat.

The defeat in the elections has already led to exchanges of accusations in Labor and to fears that the infighting and the leadership struggle might resume. Baraq, who was Peres' personal campaign manager, voiced sharp criticism of the election campaign line adopted by Ramon. He said that "questions about Netanyahu's suitability as prime minister were posed too late, and by then Netanyahu had been legitimized and we had become used to the idea that he was a prospective candidate for the job." Baraq believes Labor made a mistake when it failed to respond to the Likud's campaign on the Jerusalem issue the first day the "Peres will divide Jerusalem" billboards appeared.

Baraq added that Labor should have used the inflammatory campaign preceding Rabin's assassination, after the Likud complained about Labor's style of discourse. In his opinion, another major mistake was "the lack of focus on specific issues, as opposed to the Likud's focused campaign. The Likud's campaign provided voters with slogans, whereas our campaign consisted of complex messages, and was too diversified and creative. All that sank in was that Bibi was unsuitable, and this was too general a message. We should have belabored the point to spectators that Bibi will take us back to the settlements. Instead, we acted like the man in the joke who is dared to a duel and sends a telegram to his adversary: 'I am going to be late; start shooting.'"

Ramon's associates accused Baraq of leaking criticism about Labor's election campaign to the press, thus hurting the party, whereas he hardly voiced such criticism in party sessions.

Israel: Labor Claims Fraud in Numerous Ballot Stations

TA3005123796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1200 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Over 50 ballot boxes, amounting to some 25,000 votes, remain uncounted by the Central Elections Committee [CEC] due to a variety of technical problems. This is in addition to the 150,000 special votes — soldiers, diplomats, sailors, convicts, and sick people — which will be counted tomorrow.

Our correspondent Ron Nesi'el points out that Netanyahu's lead over Peres is 0.7 percent, or some 20,000 votes. Nevertheless, even Labor officials admit that the chances of these votes according Peres victory are slim.

Some 63,000 ballots in the Knesset elections and 143,000 ballots in the premiership elections were disqualified. Knesset Member Ra'anan Kohen, Labor's representative in the CEC, is asking for a spot-check of the disqualified ballots to verify their source and find an explanation for the big discrepancy between the disqualified Knesset and premiership ballots.

[Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew at 1130 GMT on 30 May notes that "with regard to the dispute between Labor and the Likud over the counting of the double-envelope ballots, it was decided to continue the verification of valid votes and to halt the computing of ballots from polling stations until then. The dispute emerged after Labor demanded to continue the verification of valid votes, arguing that numerous cases of fraud are suspected in polling stations in Bene Beraq and settlements in the territories."]

Israel: Third Way Leader — No Deal With NRP

TA3005133196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1300 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In Tel Aviv, Third Way leader Avigdor Qahalani has met with the NRP [National Religious Party] chairman. The two told our correspondent Ya'el Ayalon that the meeting did not deal with the coordination of positions. Qahalani said that the Third Way will initiate and coordinate positions with Yisra'el Ba'aliya, with which it has a surplus votes agreement and agreements on antireligious coercion and the continuation of the political process.

Israel: Olmert — Netanyahu To Honor 'All Political Obligations'

TA3005161696 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1600 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu has begun consultations, and has already met with the leaders of the National Religious Party, Gesher, and Tzomet as well as with top Likud members.

Emerging from a tete-a-tete meeting with him, Likud Knesset Member Ehud Olmert said Netanyahu would honor all political obligations. Our correspondent Pe'erli Shahar reports that referring to a unity government, Olmert asserted that Netanyahu's commitment is first and foremost to the religious and ultra-Orthodox parties.

Israel: Levi—Government To Promote Peace

TA3005181996 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1710 GMT 30 May 96

[Interview with Likud Knesset Member David Levi, "the prospective foreign minister in Netanyahu's government," at the Hilton Hotel in Tel Aviv, by anchorman Hayim Yavin and political correspondent Nisim Mish'al, in the Jerusalem studio — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Yavin] Can we already address you as Mr. Foreign Minister?

[Levi] We have not yet formed a government. We will form a government in due time, when the final returns are published. Then everybody will know what his job will be.

[Yavin] Could you substantiate Binyamin Netanyahu's statement that Israel will abide by all its obligations and the agreements it signed and will promote the peace issue?

[Levi] The government's goal is to promote the peace process; that is, to attain peace. This peace is a supreme goal; it was part of our platform and it is a goal of the Israeli people. Of course, security is of utmost importance and is what guarantees peace. A peace that does not guarantee security is not peace, and a people that is not strong and does not uphold its security cannot march toward peace. Our goal will be to attain peace.

[Yavin] Will you pull out from Hebron?

[Levi] We said from the outset that some issues were unacceptable. If you believe in peace, then where Jews live Arabs should not be ousted. We must create a reality whereby Jews and Arabs live together. As far as I am concerned, this is the real peace and anything that rules out, cancels, or eliminates a living and breathing fact is not peace.

[Yavin] You did not answer our question about a pullout from Hebron.

[Levi] After entering office we will deal with every issue in accordance with the interests of the people, the country, and, of course, the Jews.

[Mish'al] Your answer is still unclear, but you have not yet entered office. I would like to ask you another question: Will you propose to Netanyahu to go for a national unity government? At one time you fervently advocated such a government.

[Levi] We must unite whenever there are cardinal problems that call for rallying all forces for the sake of the nation and the country. We have not yet set up a government. We have our natural partners, and as soon as we start forming a government we will have to examine every path, but first and foremost....

[Mish'al, interrupting] I don't get it. Are you in favor of a national unity government or not?

[Levi] Nisim, if we said today that we were putting everything on hold until a unity government is set up, we could go past the 45 days [assigned to the prime minister by law to form a government]. Yesterday I heard Labor officials categorically rule out such a possibility. I do not rule it out, but our main mission is to rally the forces that are prepared to abide by the basic guidelines of our government. Afterward, and if such an approach is made — of course, this is the exclusive authority of the prime minister — if you ask me what I think, I am in favor of it. I am not, however, in favor of putting everything on hold until we see if this can come about or not.

[Yavin] And what about the evacuation of Hebron?

[Levi] There is a partner and we will talk to him; we said as much. There are facts, and they cannot be ignored. I said as much even before we formed the Likud-Gesher-Tzomet bloc. We will talk with this partner. We did not promise to present the positions of Labor and Meretz. We have our own positions. There is no peace at all costs. We aspire to peace, we will do a lot to promote it and attain it, and we will do everything to defend and uphold the things that are vital to the Israeli people.

[Yavin] If I understand you correctly, you will hold up the upcoming stage, which is the evacuation of Hebron?

[Levi] Anything that endangers the security and the free life of Jews in Hebron....[pauses] We will advance toward peace but we will not endanger the lives of Jews in any way whatsoever.

Israel: Likud Spokesman Comments on New Approach to Peace Process

LD3105094096 Rome RAI Radio Uno Network in Italian 0600 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In South Lebanon Hizballah have killed seven people, including four Israeli soldiers, and last night Tel Aviv immediately responded by bombarding the bases of the pro-Iranian fundamentalist guerrillas. These were the first reactions to the election in Israel. [passage omitted]

Netanyahu is already at work preparing his government. But in what direction is he moving? Our correspondent in Jerusalem, Riccardo Cristiano, asked a leading member of Likud, the party of the now near-certain victor of the Israeli elections.

[Begin recording] [Cristiano] Zalman Shoval is the former Israeli ambassador to the United States and Netanyahu's party's [Likud's] spokesman on international relations.

Do you think that a government of national unity is possible?

[Shoval, in English with superimposed Italian translation] It is possible, yes, but I would not say probable. It would demand Labor's readiness to accept several changes of policy that we intend to adopt in the management of the peace process.

[Cristiano] What changes?

[Shoval] A different approach with regards to negotiations with Syria. With the Palestinians, on the other hand, we do not intend to alter what has already been done, but we are opposed to the very idea of a Palestinian state. As far as security and the fight against terrorism are concerned, we will no longer trust 'Arafat.

[Cristiano] Does this mean that you are ready to reenter with your soldiers the territories now governed by 'Arafat, to hunt down suspect elements?

[Shoval] Mr. Peres, after the bomb outrages recently, even he said this was not ruled out by the Oslo agreements, but he did not do it. We, however, will do it, because we are convinced that although the Palestinian territories are autonomous, they are still part of Israel, in which we have full responsibility for security. Apart from that, we will respect the agreements already made.

[Cristiano] So you are ready to respect the commitment to withdraw from Hebron?

[Shoval] This is something we will have to decide, to take a position. We will need to negotiate, but not hastily. [end recording]

Israel: Amb. Rabinovich To Resign if Netanyahu Becomes Premier

TA3005173896 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1630 GMT 30 May 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Professor Itamar Rabinovich, Israel's ambassador to the United States, will resign if Binyamin Netanyahu becomes prime minister, our correspondent in Washington reports.

Israel: Netanyahu's Prospective Senior Appointments Reported

TA3105045296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0400 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu plans to complete the formation of his government within two weeks. Our party affairs correspondent Yaron Deqel assesses that the two candidates for the post of defense minister are Knesset Member [MK] Dan Meridor and reserve Major General Yitzhaq Mordekhay. David Levi will be appointed to the post of foreign minister, and Ari'el Sharon will be given the finance portfolio. MK's Beni Begin, Moshe Qatzav, Refa'el Eytan, Tzahi Hanegbi, and Limor Livnat will also be appointed ministers. Three ministries each will be given to SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] and the NRP [National Religious Party], two to Yisra'el Ba'aliya, and one to The Third Way.

Israel: Netanyahu Decides To Add MK's To Each Portfolio

TA3105100696 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0900 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu has decided that the key to a portfolio in the government will be four or five Knesset members [MK's] rather than three, as previously maintained. Our party affairs correspondent Yaron Deqel reports that according to this equation, SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] and the NRP [National Religious Party] will each receive two portfolios, while Yisra'el Ba'aliya and The Third Way will receive one portfolio each. In this scenario, the Likud will receive 12 portfolios, including prime minister-designate Binyamin Netanyahu.

Israel: Shekel, Stocks Fall Due To Election Jitters

TA3105092996 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 31 May 96 p 18

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Stocks are expected to be influenced in the days ahead by economic policy announcements by Binyamin Netanyahu, the probable winner of the prime ministerial election, and by share prices of Israeli companies traded in New York.

Stocks fell yesterday amid concern Netanyahu would slow the Middle East peace process and fail to introduce economic reforms.

The Ma'of Index fell 4.34 percent to 214.1 and the Two-Sided Index fell 4.84 percent to 201.3. The Ma'of Index fell 1.9 percent in the week, and the Two-Sided Index fell 2.5 percent in the week.

"People panicked in the middle of the night, came in the morning, and sold like mad," said Arye Ma'oz, vice president at the Tel Aviv firm Central Securities.

Of 990 issues trading across the exchange yesterday, 16 times as many shares fell as rose. Not a single share rose on the Mishtanim Index. Some NIS [new Israeli shekels] 193.3 million worth of shares traded, NIS 85.6m. above Tuesday's [28 May] level and more than double the month's average trading level. The exchange was closed on Wednesday.

The indexes recovered some losses after falling more than 6 percent in mid-day trading. [passage omitted]

[A related report on page 1 adds: "In foreign exchange trading the shekel depreciated by 0.334 percent and settled at 3.301 to the dollar. Against the Bank of Israel's basket of leading currencies, the Israeli currency fell by 0.828 percent to NIS 3.6869 to the basket. Shortly after trading commenced, the dollar climbed momentarily to NIS 3.31, in what traders described as a politically inspired demand for foreign currency."

["Observers said trading next week is likely to continue to be characterized by a lack of confidence, so long as the political situation has not stabilized and foreign investors — whose holdings count for some 15 percent of shares traded in Tel Aviv — weigh the future of the peace process."]

Israel: 'Some' in Labor Favor Hebron Pullout Before New Government

TA3105085196 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 31 May 96 p 2

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Some Labor cabinet ministers, who requested not to be named, favor Prime Minister Shim'on Peres ordering an IDF [Israel Defense Forces] redeployment in Hebron before the new government — which will apparently be led by Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu — takes office, so as not to risk a long delay in the pullout.

Sources close to Palestinian Authority President Yasir 'Arafat say that he too wants to know about the timetable for redeployment, before a new cabinet is approved by the Knesset.

At the same time, 'Arafat has been very careful not to make any statement that could be construed as negative regarding Netanyahu's apparent election. This message urging Peres to act on Hebron was echoed yesterday by Hebron Mayor Mustafa al-Natshah.

SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] leader Arye Der'i, a potential coalition partner of Netanyahu's, said last night on Channel 1 that he hopes that if Netanyahu forms a government, there will be an unspecified delay before the IDF redeploys from Hebron. [passage omitted]

There is speculation that Netanyahu would not oppose Peres taking such a unilateral move, since Netanyahu then would not have to decide between adhering to an international agreement signed by Israel and coalition pressure from those opposing the move.

Should the redeployment not succeed, Netanyahu could always blame Peres. [passage omitted]

[A report by Menahem Rahat on page 7 of Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew on 31 May adds: "Knesset Member Ari'el Sharon stated yesterday that the Likud government will not pull out of Hebron and will not withdraw IDF troops from the ancient city. He asserted that the Likud will implement its plan to create territorial continuity between Hebron's Jewish neighborhoods and Qiryat Arba'. At the same time, he added that Hebron's Palestinian population would be given civil administrative powers."]

Israel: Peres Consults Military Establishment on Hebron Evacuation

TA3105100796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0900 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres this morning held a brief consultation with the heads of the defense establishment regarding the military aspects of Hebron's evacuation. Our political correspondent Shlomo Raz reports that so far no decision has been made regarding this issue. The meeting was attended by, among others, Deputy Defense Minister Ori Or, the chief of staff, the head of the Shin Bet, the commander of the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] Central Command, and the coordinator of activities in the territories.

Israel: Closure on Territories Eased; Workers Permitted Entry

TA3105063796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0600 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] this morning eased the closure on the territories, returning it to the dimensions it had two weeks ago. As of this morning, Palestinian workers from Gaza aged 40 and above who possess work permits from before the elections may enter Israel. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem reports that some 7,500 workers are included in this category. Some 2,500 workers from Judaea and Samaria with work permits issued before the elections may also enter Israel.

The Israeli industrial zones in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza will open for Palestinian workers, and goods can be transported via escorted trucks from the Qarni and Erez checkpoints in the Gaza Strip.

Israel: Sharansky Interviewed on Election Results

MS3105092496 London FINANCIAL TIMES in English 31 May 96 p 4

[Report on interview with Natan Sharansky, leader of the Yisrael Ba-Aliya party, by Julian Ozanne; place and date not given: "Sharansky Breaks Into the Political Limelight"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Mr Natan Sharansky's makeshift and eclectic new immigrant party of professors and former prisoners of conscience yesterday emerged from the wilderness of political dissidence to become an essential element in any future Israeli government.

In what amounts to a remarkable political triumph in Israeli democracy, Mr Sharansky's Yisrael Ba-Aliya party, funded by a bank loan of $1.5m, won 167,000 votes in Israel's elections and is predicted to take seven seats in the 120-member parliament. With such a bloc, it is virtually impossible for any government to be formed without Mr Sharansky, now a likely candidate for housing minister.

Mr Sharansky, who spent nine years in a Soviet prison for his efforts to free Soviet Jewry, campaigned on a platform of radical policies to rapidly integrate new immigrants, mostly from the former Soviet Union, into the economic, political and social mainstream.

Dressed in an olive green workers' cap and beaming with excitement, Mr Sharansky flanked by the new members of parliament from his party, yesterday declared his victory a landmark achievement.

"We believe that what happened was a historical and unique event in the history of Israel and Zionism," he said. "For the first time, new immigrants have become a political force in Israel and equal partners in the decision-making process both for their own fate and the fate of the country."

Mr Sharansky's emergence as a kingmaker of the future coalition government is the culmination of a remarkable human odyssey. After his release from jail Mr Sharansky, now 48, came to Israel in 1986 to campaign for the release of Soviet Jewry and spent the next 10 years quietly learning the political game and fighting for better policies to absorb the 650,000 immigrants who arrived in Israel since 1988. Only last year did he give up on the main parties and decide to form his own party.

The ever impish Mr Sharansky yesterday boasted his party officials were "rookies" in politics and had to fight the big parties who received public funds to fight their campaign. In many towns in the country Yisrael Ba-Aliya used private apartments and bomb shelters as campaign headquarters. They had no experience and had to educate newcomers, who do not read Hebrew, on how to vote on Hebrew ballot papers containing the names of 21 parties.

"We have to learn this system of political negotiations in the next 48 hours," Mr Sharansky said. "With all the professors and prisoners of conscience in our party it shouldn't be too difficult."

Widely known for his jokes and cheeky disrespect for authority, Mr Sharansky is nevertheless wedded to the principles of his party platform. His views on Middle East peace make him a lot closer to Mr Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the rightwing Likud bloc. He recognises limited Palestinian autonomy but is against a Palestinian state, negotiations on Jerusalem and wants security to remain exclusively in Israeli hands. On peace with Syria, he conditions any moves with democratisation of the Damascus regime, a prospect which, he admits, could take 25 years.

He will press for much better housing, health care, employment opportunities and business incentives for new immigrants; for a continuing massive influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union; and for rapid dismantling of state cartels, privatisation and economic liberalisation. On one issue he might clash with ultra-orthodox parties, who emerged much stronger in the elections. He favours measures to protect immigrants who are non-Jewish, such as Russian orthodox Christians who immigrated to Israel as dependents and are not considered to be Jewish by the state.

"We won't give up our demands," he said, "but we want to resolve these issues by dialogue."

Israel: IAF Planes Attack Hizballah Target; Searches Continue

TA3105050596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0400 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Israel Air Force [IAF] planes last night attacked a terrorist target in the Ba'labakk area of Lebanon's al-Biqa' in reaction to yesterday's attacks. News agencies report that the planes fired several missiles toward the target and that fires erupted on the spot. Sounds of explosions were heard in the place for an hour after the attack.

Searches continue in Marj 'Uyun and its environs for those who cooperated with the terrorists who laid the two bombs yesterday. A senior IDF [Israel Defense Forces] officer told our military affairs correspondent Karmela Menashe that Hizballah is gathering intelligence regarding the IDF's modus operandi. Yesterday the terrorists detonated one bomb, luring the rescue force into a trap. When the soldiers acted according to standing procedures, the second bomb was activated.

A security source told our correspondent that yesterday's attack does not constitute a deviation from the agreement of understandings, adding, however, that we will not permit attacks out of villages and will react to this.

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 0405 GMT on 31 May includes a report by Hayim Zissowitz from Washington, in which Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich is recorded as saying: "We approached the Americans and pointed out to them the gravity of the incident and the fact that this constituted a blatant violation of the understandings, because the attack occurred in a civilian area."]

Israel: Arens—Understandings Limit IDF

TA3105071196 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 0400 GMT 31 May 96

[Telephone interview with Moshe Arens, "the prospective defense minister in Netanyahu's government," by correspondents No'omi Qeren and Shlomi Stein; place not given — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Qeren] Moshe Arens, if you were defense minister today, what would you do about the Lebanon issue?

[Arens] Look, I am not in the habit of speaking about operative issues via the phone or radio. It is preferable to discuss these issues on another occasion or in another forum.

[Qeren] What should the Israeli Government do about the situation in Lebanon? On the one hand our hands are tied, while on the other the attacks are continuing.

[Arens] Look, one thing is clear, and that is that the understandings reached with Hizballah after Operation Accountability and Operation Grapes of Wrath — if we may term them as understandings — tie the IDF's [Israel Defense Forces] hands and make it difficult for it to operate against Hizballah. I am extremely concerned that the attacks and incidents stem, to a large extent, from our inability to act forcefully and provide the IDF the opportunity....

[Qeren, interrupting] These understandings, however, are a fact on the ground. How do we proceed from here?

[Arens] I do not know what you mean. Hizballah is not the United Nations, an international body, or the United States. I do not attribute great weight to the understandings achieved with this terrorist organization.

[Stein] Does this mean that a new Israeli Government headed by Binyamin Netanyahu may within a couple of weeks state that the understandings reached in the wake of Operation Grapes of Wrath are history and that the new Israeli Government is not bound by them?

[Arens] I do not know. I am only saying that these understandings limit the IDF's ability to operate, and this may have grave consequences.

[Qeren] Will Netanyahu's government strive to change these understandings?

[Arens] I do not know. The Netanyahu government has still not been established. The final election results have not been issued yet. I think it is too early to speak about this.

Israel: Netanyahu Preelection Interview on Peace Process, Golan

TA3005152596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1400 GMT 30 May 96

[Interview with Israeli Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu by David Ze'ev "toward the end of the election campaign"; place not given — recorded]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] [Ze'ev] What will you do on the first day you enter the Prime Minister's Office?

[Netanyahu] The first thing that I will do is to change the path towards peace, to change it to a different direction that I believe can bring us a secure peace. In practice, this means that we will not disregard the facts that have been established since Oslo, but we will make sure that the other side, the Palestinian side, keeps all its obligations. Secondly, we will return freedom of action for the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and the Israeli security forces to act against terrorists as is needed. I don't want to say that this is an easy task because the situation is now a very complicated one, but I believe we can overcome. I am absolutely confident about it.

As to the negotiations with the Palestinians on the final settlement: We propose self-government, and that is contrary to the Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. I would offer the Palestinians an opportunity to run just about every aspect of their daily lives with the exception of security and foreign affairs — that will remain in our hands. I will prevent the repartition of Jerusalem, I will ensure its unity, and we will close the PLO offices in the city. I think this is a different path, a new path, one that will give us the security we crave and the peace we deserve.

[Ze'ev] As you know, the permanent status negotiations have just begun and the presumption, I think, is that the Palestinians will get more as a result of these permanent status talks than they already have. But from what I am hearing from you, are you willing to give them anything more than they already have?

[Netanyahu] The concept that I have is that they will have autonomy, a very generous arrangement where they effectively can administer their lives with no interference from us except in those areas that require security. But I also believe that what we should strive for are autonomous areas alongside security and settlement areas; security zones which are stipulated both in Madrid and Camp David, and indeed are mentioned in the Oslo agreement as well. So, we are not going to argue about what has already happened — that is gone. It wasn't what we had wanted; we thought it was a dangerous arrangement. It turns out that all our prophecies have come true. But I think the question now is how do we move forward.

[Ze'ev] In terms of the Syrians: Are you willing to carry out any kind of withdrawal on the Golan Heights?

[Netanyahu] I think we have to stay on our positions on the Golan Heights because they offer us the guarantee that we will not be attacked again. We can, of course, sign a piece of paper with the Syrians and bring them to the banks of the Kinneret, but I ask you: Will that give Syria a greater or lesser option to break the peace in the future. I think the answer is self-evident.

[Ze'ev] But is there a point in between a full withdrawal and no withdrawal at all?

[Netanyahu] I think the issue is not territorial, and I am not sure, in fact, whether al-Asad's first priority is that we will withdraw from the Golan. That may be his fifth or fourth priority. He has other considerations, otherwise he would have already pocketed the entire Golan, which Mr. Peres has in fact offered him. What I intend to do is to tell al-Asad that we can strike a different bargain: That is, that Syria, that wants certain things, and we, who want certain things, can arrive at an understanding. For example, in the area of security and counterterror. They are sponsoring a proxy terror war against us through Hizballah and through the Palestinian organizations in Damascus. We want an end to terror. If Syria were to dismantle the Hizballah operation in south Lebanon, and indeed stop the Palestinian terrorist organizations from operating in Damascus, then we could see our way to use our influence to remove Syria from the list of countries supporting terrorism, which the U.S. Government publishes. That is worth a great deal to Syria in political and economic terms. So, rather than proceed on the lines that the Government of Israel has so far been proceeding, I will seek a series of subarrangements. That is, arrangements that will lead to gradual normalization of relations between us and Syria rather than endangering our security by withdrawing from the Golan Heights.

Israel: Clinton-Netanyahu Working Relations Viewed

TA3105101496 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 31 May 96 p A11

[Commentary by 'Aqiva Eldar: "Working With an American President"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Last week Binyamin Netanyahu promised columnist William Safire of THE NEW YORK TIMES that when elected prime minister "he will work with any American President." At that time his remarks were regarded as a barb at President

Clinton, who made no efforts to conceal his strong desire to go on working with Shim'on Peres. Now it looks like both leaders are doomed to work together, at least until the end of the year.

Netanyahu acquired his education in the United States and served in two senior diplomatic posts there (minister in the Israeli Embassy in Washington and ambassador to the United Nations). He knows one cannot begin to exaggerate the importance of relations with the United States to Israel's national interest. Netanyahu was deputy foreign minister when Yitzhaq Shamir paid the heaviest political price of all for his head-on collision with the United States over the loan guarantees-settlements affair.

Clinton and the Democratic Party, who are now in the midst of an election campaign, know that the same affair helped them remove George Bush from the White House.

In the next few weeks Netanyahu will be invited to the White House, where he will find a man whose political instincts brought him at the age of 46, his age exactly, to the most powerful position in the world. Until November these instincts will be pushed into a corner along with other ambitions, such as promoting the permanent arrangement and resuming the peace talks with Syria. The goodwill of the Jews and their money will henceforth be much more important than the Palestinians' wish to abide by the Oslo agreements. The U.S. taxpayer will not protest if the President does not urge Congress to approve money allocations to the residents of the territories.

At the same time, Clinton has taken so much pride in the peace process that he cannot disassociate himself from it without hurting his prestige (although foreign relations is not what will determine the outcome of the elections). In the short run Netanyahu need only abstain from provoking the Arab partners to the peace process and utter the moderate words in his rich English vocabulary. He may send a congenial ambassador to Washington, who will wisely keep his distance from U.S. internal politics.

As prime minister he will have to reformulate the balance of his government's relations with the administration and with Congress. Clinton was not pleased about the channel the Likud and the Jewish right opened with Newt Gingrich and Senator Alphonse D'Amato, Bob Dole's right-hand man. He saw it as a dubious attempt to sabotage the peace policy bearing his name and imprint. Such moves may shorten Clinton's indebtedness to the new prime minister, once he is reelected President of the United States.

Clinton's open, and some say, exaggerated support for Peres during his first term proved two days ago to be a tactical failure in an important chapter of his foreign policy. The Middle East's slide into violence, which would undermine his efforts to consolidate an Arab and international coalition to curb Iran, terror, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons, might prove a serious strategic failure in his second term.

Seeing that this will be his last term, Clinton will be free of the fear of Jewish influence. Relations between the Jewish community and the Netanyahu government will be affected by the new government's policy regarding the peace process and the question of Jewish pluralism. The attitude of the Jewish community toward the Peres government's policy on these issues was complex and troubled until the last minute.

Jordan: Tripartite Summit To Be Held in al-'Aqabah 5 Jun

JN3105102196 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic 31 May 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Amman, AL-RA'Y—A tripartite summit attended by His Majesty King Husayn, His Excellency Egyptian President Muhammad Husni Mubarak, and President Yasir 'Arafat, chairman of the Palestinian National Authority, will be held in al-'Aqabah on 5 June, informed diplomatic sources said.

The sources indicated that the three leaders will continue the discussions they started in Cairo on 12 May on the Palestinian-Israeli final status negotiations, as well as the aftermath of the expected success of right-wing leader Binyamin Netanyahu in the Israeli elections.

The sources ruled out the possibility of expanding the summit at the current time, but they stressed that there is still a chance to hold Arab summits to coordinate Arab stands any time. [passage omitted]

Jordan: Sources Deny Planned Visit to Kuwait To Reopen Embassy

JN3005134296 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic 30 May 96 pp 1, 16

[Report by Nivin 'Abd-al-Hadi]

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Ministry sources asserted that Jordanian-Kuwaiti ties are currently headed toward fraternal normalcy. The sources added that this progress is being tangibly felt through the exchange of letters and telephone conversations between officials of the two countries. This shows that a complete thaw in bilateral relations will take place soon.

In the meantime, the sources denied that the ministry formed a delegation to visit Kuwait to make arrangements to reopen the Jordanian Embassy there in preparation for restoring diplomatic ties with Kuwait on the ambassadorial level.

The sources told AL-DUSTUR: To date, there have been no lists of people nominated for the post of Jordanian ambassador in Kuwait.

The sources pointed out that the automatic outcome of a restoration of fraternal ties between Jordan and Kuwait, which date back to old times, and of the current contacts and diplomatic efforts will eventually and naturally be the reopening of embassies and the reappointment of ambassadors. This does not necessitate the formation of delegations for this purpose at present. Efforts toward this end are being made by both sides. There is no need to make predictions about things that are still uncertain.

The sources pointed out that Jordan, as usual, seeks to restore and enhance its ties with all Arab states, in general, and with the Gulf states, in particular, especially since these ties have suffered a sort of deterioration in recent years. There is no doubt that Kuwait is one of these states with which we seek to enhance and promote our fraternal ties.

Jordan Said Introducing Visa Restrictions for Palestinians

MM3005154996 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 30 May 96 pp 1, 4

[Report by Muhammad al-Da'mah: "In the First Measure of Its Kind in the History of Relations, Jordan Imposes Visa on Palestinians and $7,000 Bail Bond"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Amman — The Jordanian authorities have imposed restrictions on the Palestinians' entry into Jordan. These measures are unprecedented in the history of relations between the two sides. The restrictions were announced in a decision issued suddenly by these authorities. It stipulated that any Palestinian must apply for an entry visa to Jordanian territory, with a bail bond amounting to 5,000 Jordanian dinars, that is the equivalent of $7,000. An authoritative source in the Palestinian Embassy in Amman has expressed his surprise at the measure. However, he said that the embassy has not so far received anything official in this connection.

The measure, which was announced yesterday, coincided with the decision to prevent some members of the Palestine National Council and the Palestinian Authority from entering Jordan and to return them to the Palestinian Authority's territory. [passage omitted]

Jordan: No Iraqi 'Conditions' for Jordanian Imports

JN3005114896 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 30-31 May 96 pp 1, 7

[Report by P.V. Vivekanand]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman—Iraq is not attaching any political condition to giving priority to Jordan in imports from proceeds of Baghdad's oil-for-food deal with the United Nations, an Iraqi embassy spokesman said Wednesday [29 May].

The spokesman, Adil Ibrahim, was replying to a question prompted by reports carried in local tabloids that Baghdad had set a list of preconditions for restoring normal relations with Jordan and returning to the old status quo where Iraq would use Jordan as the main conduit for imports and the Kingdom's industrial exports would receive preferential treatment in the government-dominated Iraqi market.

The reports, which were only informally denied by Jordanian officials, said the purported conditions included demands such as the government of Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti be removed from power, the office here of the Iraqi National Accord be closed, and other opposition activities be curbed, defector Nizar al-Khazraji be returned to Iraq, and Jordanian criticism of the policies of the Baghdad government be stopped.

Mr. Ibrahim categorically denied that such demands were made.

"The Iraqi Government has not presented any demands or conditions to the Jordanian Government related to trade with Jordan," Mr. Ibrahim told the JORDAN TIMES.

Iraq respects the principle that trade is a normal state of relations between two countries and does not attach demands and preconditions," he added.

Jordanian sources also rejected the reports as unfounded. "It is sheer nonsense and has no base whatsoever," said a well-placed source. "Jordan has received no such conditions from Iraq and we don't expect to receive any either."

Officials at the Amman Chamber of Industry, the main Jordanian organisation facilitating exports to Iraq, also denied the report.

"As far as we know, and we should be among those who know, there are no such Iraqi demands or conditions," said 'Ali al-Dajani, an advisor to Amman Chamber of Industry President Khaldun Abu Hasan.

"The Iraqi side has told us to send a delegation to Baghdad to ascertain the precise needs of the Iraqi market and make offers," said Mr. al-Dajani, adding that this was the net outcome of recent meetings held here by a team representing Iraqi businessmen.

"We are in fact seeking details about the mechanisms that the U.N. would adopt towards food and medicine exports to Iraq, and we have not heard of any political demand from Baghdad in this context," he added.

'Adnan al-Qudsi, president of the Federation of Iraqi Chambers of Commerce and Industry, was quoted as saying in the local media that Iraqi importers would focus more on Jordanian sources. He said he expected a considerable increase in Jordanian exports to Iraq once Iraqi oil starts flowing, probably in July, after arrangements are finalised under the deal reached with the U.N.

Jordan gets all its oil needs—about 70,000 barrels of crude and fuel oil—trucked overland from Iraq. Part of the oil bill is settled by Jordanian exports of food and medicine under an official protocol.

The Kingdom's imports of oil and exports of food and medicine to Iraq under an official protocol are not covered by the Iraq-U.N. deal.

Mr. al-Dajani said the Amman Chamber of Industry expected the bulk of Iraqi imports from Jordan, which will be paid for from the proceeds of the deal with the U.N. come from the Kingdom's private sector.

"The Jordanian and Iraqi private sectors have always maintained very good relations that are not hampered by any political development," commented Mr. al-Dajani.

His Majesty King Husayn said Tuesday [28 May] Baghdad should have accepted the oil-for-food deal two years ago.

"We are comfortable with the acceptance of the United Nations resolution," King Husayn told a visiting delegation of representatives from the Arab League.

"Finally, the decision was taken by the (Iraqi) leadership although it could have been taken two years ago to ease the suffering of the people," the King said.

Jordanian-Iraqi political relations took a plunge since August when the Kingdom gave shelter to defectors Husayn Kamil and Saddam Kamil and their wives, both daughters of Iraqi President Saddam Husayn.

The Kingdom, expressing concern over the mounting suffering of the Iraqi people under the sweeping international sanctions imposed against their country since August 1990, also stepped [as published] its criticism of the policies of the Baghdad government.

Jordan called for changes in Iraq to be brought about by Iraqis themselves but firmly opposed any threat to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country.

Relations turned worse when defectors Husayn Kamil and Saddam Kamil returned home in February under a presidential pardon but were killed, along with other family members, according to official Iraqi reports, by their clan.

Since then Jordan has allowed the Iraqi National Accord, an exile group opposed to the regime, to open an office here and also gave shelter to Nizar Khazraji, a former chief of staff of the Iraqi army, who fled his country in March.

Jordan protested strongly when at least six Jordanians were killed in March and April in suspicious circumstances in Iraq and recalled its ambassador from Baghdad.

The envoy, Bassam Qaqish, has since returned to the Iraqi capital. In a meeting with Mr. Qaqish two weeks ago, Iraqi Parliament Speaker Sa'dun Hammadi was quoted as saying Baghdad wanted to improve its relations with Amman.

Jordan is also the base of an American air force unit flying reconnaissance missions over southern Iraq for a two-month period as part of U.N. resolutions adopted after the war over Kuwait.

Despite political differences with Iraq, Jordan maintained its economic ties with its eastern neighbour. It continued to receive Iraqi oil and supply food and medicine in partial settlement of the oil bill.

However, citing pressures on the foreign currency reserves of the Kingdom, the government has reduced the amount of exports to Iraq covered under the official trade protocol to around $220 million in 1996 from around $400 million in 1995.

The reduction is mostly applicable to products that do not originate in Jordan such as vegetable oil, which used to be imported and paid for from Jordanian reserves, repacked and exported to Iraq. Commentators in the local media have been complaining that the reduction of exports to Iraq was a mistake, given that the Iraqi government subsequently signed the oil-for-food agreement, which allows for immediate payment for Iraq's food and medicine imports under United Nations supervision.

In a column in the AL-RA'Y Arabic daily on Wednesday, Dr. Fahid al-Fanik, said despite everything Jordan stood to benefit from the Iraq-UN deal since the Kingdom did not cut off economic relations with Baghdad even at the height of political difference.

"From a purely economic point of view, my evaluation of the al-Kabariti government is positive; not because it has done much in the economic field, but because what it did not do what we accused it of wanting to do," [as published] Dr. al-Fanik wrote under the headline "Economic accomplishments in 100 days"—a reference to the time in office so far of the al-Kabariti government.

"It did not break our brotherly relations with Iraq and it did not seek to exacerbate tensions with Iraq," Dr. al-Fanik wrote. Economic relations with Iraq continued to be normal, with the continued flow of Jordanian products to the Iraqi market and Iraqi oil to Jordan at half the international price, he noted.

"Had the government sacrificed Jordan's relations with Iraq, it would have sacrificed the real interests of Jordan for unrealistic aspirations," the usually well-informed economist wrote.

Jordanian official say strictly economic reasons were behind reducing the volume of the official trade protocol with Iraq. They point out that exports to Iraq far exceeded the cost of oil that Iraq supplied to Jordan and, as a result, accummulating debts of Iraq were getting too heavy for Jordan to shoulder.

According to officials, Iraq's debts to Jordan, accummulated over the years during which Baghdad paid partially in oil for Jordanian exports, now stand at around $1.3 billion.

The officials explain that Jordan could not continue to pay from its foreign exchange reserves for imports for the Iraqi market since the Kingdom itself was seeking to increase its reserves to meet with an International Monetary Fund (IMF) required level.

Furthermore, Jordan also wants itself to be in a position to be able to meet the eventuality of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) issuing its own currency, leading to demands on the Kingdom's treasury to redeem the Jordanian dinars in circulation in the Palestinian territories.

Jordan: Arabs Urged To 'Reconsider' Peace Approach After Likud Win

JN3105085396 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic 31 May 96 pp 1, 27

[Editorial: "What After the Israeli Elections?"]

[FBIS Translated Text] With the announcement of the provisional results of the Israeli elections, which have entrenched the Likud leader and his right-wing Israeli alliances as the decisionmakers in the Israeli authorities and in the Knesset, the issue of a comprehensive, lasting, and just peace in the region faces various possibilities, especially since one of the partners in the peace process — namely, Shim'on Peres and his party — will be away from the scene for the next four years.

All world, regional, and Arab reactions focus on this issue, as reflected by the statements of Bill Clinton, who pledged to reduce the threats posed to Israel if it decides to take risks by meeting the requirements of peace. He reiterated the U.S. pledge, which emphasizes the continuation of the regional peace process.

Within the same context, we point to high-level European statements on continuing the peace process, despite the fact that some of these statements were somewhat pessimistic, saying that Netanyahu and his government will slow or obstruct this process completely, or at least partially, as the European Union's head put it yesterday.

Naturally, Israel's new leaders know well that the decision for peace in the region is an international and regional decision. Therefore, Netanyahu yesterday stressed his commitment to peace and to the agreements signed by the former Israeli Government. The new Israeli Government is expected to stress this commitment once the final results of the Israeli elections are announced.

However, the basic dilemma that results from the Israeli elections lies in the attempts by Netanyahu and his government to arrange the Israeli internal situation after the earthquake, as one Labor party official put it. At best, this will keep the peace process frozen until after the U.S. elections at the end of the year.

In light of this fact, the parties that agreed with the former Israeli Government to establish a comprehensive peace in the region should reconsider their calculations in view of the Likud's ascension to the negotiating table.

Perhaps, the first factor in this reconsideration is the need to work out a unified pan-Arab position on making peace with Israel under its new leadership. This requires the success of the sincere efforts to hold an expanded Arab summit as soon as possible in order to theoretically and practically address all the possibilities created by the Likud Party's success with regard to the peace process in particular and the region's future in general.

Hopes will continue to be pinned on the Jordanian-Egyptian-Palestinian summit that will be held in al-'Aqabah on 5 June and on the efforts of the Arab nation's leaders on the path to revive solidarity, cooperation, and cohesion among the Arab states and peoples because this is the only response to the challenges and developments that face the Arab nation today, tomorrow, and in the future.

Jordan: Editorial Says Regional Peace Remains Common Interest

JN3105120596 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic
31 May 96 pp 1, 20

[Editorial: "Peace Is a Common Interest and an Expression of International Will"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Regardless of the final results of the Israeli elections and regardless of the possible interpretations of this deep change in the map of Israeli political forces, we would like to view just and comprehensive peace, which is acceptable to everyone, as a common interest for all peoples in the region, which once again stands at a decisive crossroad.

Moreover, we would like to view all the statements by the rival Israeli factions during the campaign as merely the kind of emotional statements that prevail in all election campaigns, inside and outside Israel.

Because peace is a common interest for all peoples in the region, without exception, and because it expresses an international desire to resolve the remaining regional disputes, end the state of war and tension, and head toward security, stability, and peace, it is unbelievable that a single party can stop history or turn back the clock, contrary to what some people thought after they were shocked by the preliminary results of the Israeli elections.

No doubt, the realities that have existed on the ground for the last four years cannot be ignored or considered as nonexistent. Severe complications and serious repercussions could result from a return to square one; namely, a return to the situation that existed before the Arab-Israeli peace agreements were signed.

While acknowledging the fact that a large and important change has happened in the Israeli political scene and that this change will have negative repercussions that cannot be predicted yet, the wager on achieving peace—a wager to which the peoples of this region have no alternative in the foreseeable future—will continue to spare us the extreme pessimism over this change while we wait for workable political programs. We realize, in advance, that these programs will differ from the unrealistic programs that the rival Israeli parties announced during the election campaign.

Jordan: Iraqi Dissident Leaves for Damascus

JN3005141596 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic
30 May 96 p 23

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman — AL-RA'Y learned that Staff Major General Wafiq al-Samara'i left Amman for Damascus on Sunday [26 May]. In a statement to AL-RA'Y, a Jordanian responsible source denied al-Samara'i, or any other Iraqi opposition member, "came under pressure." The source added that al-Samara'i's family lives in Damascus and that he is visiting his family. It noted that al-Samara'i was "allowed to stay based on his desire. He is free to move wherever he wants."

Al-Samara'i arrived in Amman in early April. He was the director of the Iraqi Military Intelligence in the Iraqi Army and defected for Syria in late 1994.

Jordan: Arrests of Islamists Escalates 'Tension'

JN3005133296 Amman THE STAR in English
30 May-5 Jun 96 pp 1, 3

[Report by Ra'd al-'Abid]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] For the past two years the relations between the government and the Islamists has been at the tight-end of the pendulum. The Jordan political system succeeded in creating an ideal model to prevent violent conflicts in the country. The Islamic movement fitted nicely in this model despite the widening gap with the government, especially since the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. However, observers believe that this relation has taken a turn for the worst recently.

The pragmatic Muslim Brotherhood, and its political arm, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) which are considered to be part and parcel of the country's political system, feel that the time is over for them.

The latest arrests in the ranks of the Brotherhood during the last few months, added more tension between the two parties.

"Arrests have not stopped since 1991, but arrest campaigns have increased during the short-life of the present government," said a Muslim Brotherhood spokesman.

About 40 influential figures in the movement were arrested during the past three months. No charges are yet filed against them, but Dr. Marwan al-Mu'ashshir, the minister of information, asserts that "arrests are in accordance with the law." He also rejects reports accusing the government of violating human rights.

"The government has not presented any legal charges, no one was taken to court," the spokesman added. "The government claims that it is still in the investigation process stage."

In their meeting last week, the government and Islamists, failed to reduce the tension between them. On the contrary, the government refused to stop its arrests, insisting that it is still building up its case.

The Brotherhood points out that these arrests harm the image of the country, and are a threat to the stability and safety of the society.

"About 20 of the 40 people that were arrested are still in custody," said deputy Thib 'Abdallah, who headed the Lower House Public Liberties Committee. Dr. 'Abdallah who broke away from the Islamic Action Front (IAF) recently, refused the claim that the arrests were related to Hamas support. "We all support Hamas as a national religious movement, but these arrests have nothing to do with that," 'Abdallah said.

A few days ago, the authorities arrested Muslim Brotherhood member, Mr. 'Abd-al-Jalil 'Awawdah, the director of Dar al-Arqam Islamic Schools: In addition, arrests were made in Amman, Russayfah and al-Zarqa. Until now, the government refused to release, Mr. Walid Tlikh, an engineer who is allegedly a Hamas supporter. Arrested last month, he is still under investigation. His wife is prevented from visiting him and sources at the Jordanian Engineers Association say that Tlikh's health is deteriorating.

Islamists are dismayed and believe that the government must take concerted actions. Observers argue that failure to do so will only worsen relations, weaken the moderates in the Islamic movement and strengthen the hand of the hardliners in the Islamic movement. They have not welcomed al-Kabariti's government, as they believe that it is no different from the previous ones. Certainly this means confrontation, observers argue.

An Islamic source who preferred not to be identified, said that "The Muslim Brotherhood is losing its base in favor of other Islamic movements that are banned." The source explained that, the illegalised Islamic Liberation Party—calling for an Islamic Caliphate—is surviving only by the mostly young members who broke away from the Muslim Brotherhood.

However, Islamic moderates are holding extensive meetings to form a new party. The idea is being discussed by two Islamic Lower House deputies, Dr. 'Abdallah and Ahmad al-Kassasbah, that recently split from the IAF.

"The Islamic situation in Jordan demands a new formula, that could include all the different Islamic point of views, and not repress one opinion" 'Abdallah said. "It is the right time to establish this party. But it is still gathering momentum."

Dr. 'Abdallah believes that the coming party will not be an alternative to the IAF, but will seek to cooperate with it. The deputy said the party will be officially announced "very soon."

Lebanon: Buwayz Cited on Results of Israeli Elections

NC3005195196 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1915 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz said that it is premature to comment on the results of the Israeli elections and to speculate on the future of the peace process. He added: If Benyamin Netanyahu's positions toward the peace process are in harmony with the principles of peace as agreed upon in Madrid, then we will deal with this situation.

Lebanon: Al-Hariri Discusses Dispute With Hizballah, Israeli Elections

NC3105070096 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0430 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri has stated that he has nothing to say about the dispute with Hizballah. He noted that he does not want to create any problem if there are intentions to close the file on the issue. He said the situation does not permit the creation of any problems and that it is normal for him to do what he has done. Al-Hariri was speaking during a meeting with editors doyen Milhim Karam, who was leading a delegation of journalists. Al-Hariri said the elections will be held, noting that efforts are under way to enact an election law that will reassure the vast majority of the people. [passage omitted]

Al-Hariri said the basic goal of the government is to prepare for peace should it be achieved and for steadfastness if no peace is reached. He said that both situations require the same effort. He noted that in Europe he sensed no linkage between offering aid to Lebanon and achieving peace. [passage omitted]

Lebanon: Cabinet Supports Prime Minister in Dispute With Hizballah

NC3105062396 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0430 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The cabinet discussed developments at an ordinary meeting under Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri at the Government House last night. Al-Hariri briefed members on his meetings with the head of the European Commission and his deputy on the mechanism for the consultative committee outlined in the April Understanding. [passage omitted]

The cabinet expressed its support for al-Hariri's stance on Hizballah. The ministers expressed their hope that the dispute will be resolved, particularly since the challenges facing the region require everyone to cooperate and follow the government. [passage omitted]

Lebanon: Islamic Jihad Leader Disdains Interest in Israeli Elections

MM3105105396 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 31 May 96 p 7

[Report by Ibrahim Humaydi: "Shallah Tells AL-HAYAH: Our Jihad To Continue"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus — Dr. Ramadan 'Abdallah Shallah, leader of the Islamic Jihad Movement, has said that Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu's victory over Prime Minister Shim'on Peres in the latest count "is a divine revenge for the martyrs and innocent people who fell in Qana and among the Palestinian people." He warned the Arabs against "offering further concessions under the peace slogan based on the Netanyahu formula."

He stressed that "our jihad is continuing," unaffected by Israeli domestic affairs. He expressed his surprise at "the Arabs' exaggerated interest in the elections" in Israel.

Dr. Shallah told AL-HAYAH that the preliminary results of the elections "are not a surprise, since we expected the right wing to win, because the Israelis do not want peace. However, it does not mean that those of the Labor Party want peace." He pointed out that "the disagreement between the two parties was over the following question: Will Israeli security be an Israeli-Palestinian job or a Palestinian-Israeli job?"

The Islamic Jihad Movement leader expressed his "regret for the Arabs' stand and their extreme interest in the enemy's elections, which proves that the Arabs had nothing and had lost the initiative, since their slogan was: Elect (Labor Party leader Shim'on) Peres. They had no way to influence events, except to wait for the results of the Israeli elections."

Lebanon: Hizballah Attack Reportedly Kills 3 Israeli Soldiers

NC3005172496 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1615 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Sources of the Lahd forces [South Lebanese Army] have said that three Israeli soldiers were killed and five others wounded in an operation carried out by Hizballah against an Israeli patrol in Marj 'Uyun in the occupied border strip. Lebanese security services explained that two powerful explosions, one-minute apart, targeted the mechanized Israeli patrol on the main road in Marj 'Uyun, where the Israeli and Lahd forces have their headquarters. According to hospital sources, two Lebanese civilians and a member of the Lahd forces were slightly wounded in the attack. The injured were taken to Marj 'Uyun hospital.

A source at the UN Interim Force in Lebanon reported that five Israeli soldiers were wounded in the explosion, two of them seriously. Security sources inside the occupied strip earlier said that 10 Israeli soldiers were wounded, one seriously.

The Islamic Resistance claimed responsibility for the operation. It said in a statement that the Qana massacre group detonated an explosive charge as an Israeli intelligence convoy was leaving Marj 'Uyun barracks at 1215. The statement said the convoy received a direct hit and all its personnel were killed or wounded. It added that a few minutes later, the resistance detonated another explosive charge as reinforcements were arriving at the scene of the first explosion. More Israelis were killed or wounded. The statement said more than 10 soldiers were killed or wounded.

Lebanon: Israel Says 4 IDF Soldiers Killed, 2 Wounded in South

TA3005191496 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1855 GMT 30 May 96

[Report by Rina Matzliah]

[FBIS Translated Text] We have grave news. It can now be reported that four IDF [Israel Defense Forces] soldiers, one a lieutenant colonel, were killed this morning in an attack near Marj 'Uyun in south Lebanon. The names of the fatalities are Lieutenant Colonel Yoram Dahan, 32 of 'Akko; Lt. Yitzhaq Mizrahi, 21, of Rehovot; 2d Lt. Moshe Harush, 23, of Jerusalem; and Staff Sergeant Yitzhaq Shapira, 21.

The incident occurred when two large explosives blew up one after the other not far from the Red Cross offices in the security zone. A news agency cameraman who was at the site by coincidence filmed the terrible moment.

This morning, when an IDF convoy was moving along the Marj 'Uyun-Metulla axis, the first explosion took place, slightly wounding two soldiers. When their colleagues, including senior officers, in a second convoy came to extend aid to the wounded, the second explosion occurred, killing the four soldiers and wounding another five. Our correspondent in the north Menahem Horowitz reports that four of the wounded were transferred to Rambam Hospital in Haifa. The condition of one of the soldiers is serious.

Two local journalists and an SLA [South Lebanese Army] officer were also wounded in the incident.

Lebanon: Israeli Aircraft Raid Ba'labakk Area

NC3105054396 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0435 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] We begin our newscast with an Israeli air raid at dawn today targeting the Ba'labakk area, specifically Tallat al-Kayyal, 500 meters from the new power plant southwest of the city. Lebanese Army antiaircraft guns in the area confronted the enemy planes. The hostile air raid caused several explosions.

Lebanon: 'Direct Hit' on Hizballah Ammunition Depot Reported

NC3105061996 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 0530 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] At 0230 today Israeli aircraft launched an air raid on Tallat al-Kayyal, near the city of Ba'labakk, where Hizballah posts are located. The raid resulted in a direct hit on an ammunition depot, from which explosions could be heard for about an hour, as our correspondent in al-Biqa' Rita al-Sabbak reported. Israeli aircraft targeted the area during the aggression in April.

Lebanon: Beirut Radio Says Israeli Air Raid Hits House, Wounds 4

NC3105073396 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0700 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The air raid carried out by Israeli military aircraft on Tallat al-Kayyal in Ba'labakk at dawn today hit the Shurayf family home, wounding Hamdan Shurayf, 27, his wife Husniyah, and their children 'Ali and Fatimah. The windows of nearby homes were smashed.

Lebanon: Hizballah Official Says 'Prepared To Retaliate' for Raid

NC3105094896 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 0915 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Shaykh Nabil Qawuq, Hizballah official in charge in south Lebanon, has said the Israeli air raid on Ba'labakk portends hard and grave consequences. He stressed that the Resistance is prepared to retaliate for Israel's violation of the April Understanding at the appropriate time. He called on the Lebanese Government to keep up with developments, to give priority to defending our kin, to take a daring stand on the Israeli violation, and to rise to the level of the challenges.

Qawuq said recent Resistance operations are an initial reply to the Israeli massacres. He said the April war has appendices and Israel must foot the bills of its aggression.

Syria: Al-Asad Receives Egyptian Foreign Minister Musa

JN3105101296 Damascus SANA in Arabic 0858 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 31 May (SANA)—President Hafiz al-Asad received Egyptian Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa at the Presidential Palace in Latakia at 1115 [0815 GMT] today. Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' attended the meeting.

Syria: Foreign Minister al-Shar' Receives EU Delegation

JN3005190296 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1515 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' received European parliamentary delegation led by (Amigo Frederic) this afternoon. [passage omitted]

The two sides discussed the situation in the region and the peace process in light of the current developments. They also discussed relations between Syria and the EU, as well as ways to promote and foster these relations, particularly with regard to the upcoming Syrian-European Cooperation Council meeting in Luxembourg on 10 and 11 June.

Syria: EU Official Comments on Visit, Israeli Elections

JN3105091396 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0415 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus—(Amigo Frederic), head of the European Parliament's committee on relations with Near East and Arabian Gulf states, said the European parliamentary delegation's visit to Damascus was successful and fruitful. He stressed the importance of Syria's regional role.

In a news conference last night, (Frederic) said that the delegation held intensive discussions and consultations with Syrian officials. He noted that the delegation was acquainted with Syria's genuine heritage. He said the discussions were extremely frank and purposeful and covered many topics frankly and explicitly.

He said that the objective of the visit was to learn about Syria's point of view regarding the conflict in the region and to convey this view to Europe so that it will be discussed by the responsible quarters in the EU, the European Parliament, the press, and public opinion there. He said that during his visit, he called for a new, more effective and deeper European role in the region, especially with regard to the peace process.

(Frederic) stressed that there must be no going back on peace in the region despite the possible results of the Israeli elections. He stressed that the European Parliament will continue to adopt the policy calling for establishing peace in the region. He added that any change in the Israeli Government must not lead to a change in Israel's policy on the peace process. He indicated that the viewpoints between the European Parliament and Syria on the peace process are close.

In response to a question on whether he will be disappointed if Likud leader Netanyahu wins the Israeli elections, (Frederic) said: Yesterday, I was asked whom I expected to win. I said: I am afraid Likud will win. However, (Frederic) said he believes that any future government must bring a realistic policy with it. He said that it is unclear whether a Likud-led government will intensively proceed with the peace process.

In response to a question, he said that European policy will continue to proceed step by step, within the framework of the Barcelona conference. He added: I expect the creation of a parliamentary coordination group between Syria and other states within the EU, the European Commission, and the European Parliament. (Frederic) indicated that Europe seeks to take part in the peace efforts in the region. However, he said, Europe does not want to take the place of the United States. He added: When Europe is asked to contribute to the peace process, it will present its recommendations and comments in this regard. However, no official decision has been made in this regard so far.

In response to a question on the delegation's economic talks in Syria, (Frederic) said the talks were good and effective and that they dealt with various economic and investment issues.

Syria: Papers Comment on Israeli Elections

JN3005123896 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0445 GMT 30 May 96

[From the press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] Under the headline: "The Most Important Question After the Israeli Elections," the newspaper AL-BA'TH speaks about the lessons drawn from the past five years of the peace process in the region. It notes that the first of these lessons is that peace in the region can be accomplished only if it is just and comprehensive and based on the resolutions of legitimacy and the implementation of the land-for-peace principle.

AL-BA'TH says: The second lesson is that peace and occupation are two incongruent things that cannot meet and that without full withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the return of the usurped rights, it is impossible for peace to see the light of day in this region neither now nor tomorrow. The third lesson is that it was proven that the ceremonies, festivals, and partial and separate deals made by Israel and other parties involved with it, under the nomenclature of peace and the peace process, are far from genuine peace. These deals failed to achieve security and stability in Israel and the region.

AL-BA'Th asserts that the most important lesson — which goes beyond the five years since the convening of the Madrid conference, during which no just and comprehensive peace has been achieved — is that it is not possible for the Israeli scheme of regional expansion and hegemony to concur with the establishment of peace, which guarantees the interest of all parties and bears the seeds of sustainability.

AL-BA'TH notes: If we go back to the Israeli elections held yesterday, we will find that peace was a major topic, although the two major parties approached this sensitive issue in different methods. AL-BA'TH maintains that the two parties did not explain why the consecutive Israeli Governments led by Shamir, Rabin, and Peres failed to achieve what they failed to accomplish through war and aggression.

AL-BA'Th concludes by asking: Will a daring man emerge in Israel and declare withdrawal from all the occupied territories and acknowledge the rights of Arabs and international legitimacy for the sake of saving the future, security, peace, and stability.

Commenting on the same issue, the newspaper AL-THAWRAH writes about the atmosphere of the Israeli elections which it says gives the impression that peace will remain far from reality. AL-THAWRAH pinpoints the haughtiness and arrogance based on ignoring the historical and geographical facts and the foundations of a just and comprehensive peace.

The paper adds: Those who hear or read the statements of Israeli officials — particularly the statements of the two major candidates, the leaders of the Labor and Likud parties — will find an exotic mixture of illusions and falsehoods that will result in peace remaining far from realization.

AL-THAWRAH says: Israel will not focus on a just and comprehensive peace unless a change takes place in their mentality; which is preoccupied by vanity, illusions of power, and false historical facts. Therefore, the role of the U.S. sponsor of the peace process should now be one of a fair and full partner.

AL-THAWRAH concludes by saying: This requires addressing the dilemma of the peace process with an objective and realistic perspective that considers peace to be in the interest of all, that security is based on mutual commitments, and that stability is the goal of the region and the world and should be achieved, regardless of who wins the elections.

Syria: Outcome of Israeli Elections on Peace Process Questioned

JN3005135696 Damascus SANA in Arabic 0710 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 30 May (SANA)—The newspaper AL-THAWRAH questions whether the peace process will witness a real breakthrough in the near future once the results of the Israeli elections are announced. It also wonders whether there will be new, positive signs that Israel will abandon the policy of force and arrogance and reconsider its positions out of a commitment to the terms and requirements of a just and comprehensive peace.

In its editorial today, the paper adds that it poses these questions in order to receive satisfactory and convincing answers from those who bet that drastic changes will be made in the Israeli position if this or that party wins the elections. Some people have pinned all their hopes on the Labor Party and have tried to embellish its proposals and policies, which frequently conflict with the objective of peace in its real and broad meaning.

AL-THAWRAH believes that the subsequent developments will be the real test to the seriousness of any party that wins the elections regarding its commitment to the bases and principles of peace. These developments are the yardstick by which we can determine whether Israel will really change or whether all the Israeli Governments are the same.

Syria: Israel Urged To Match Syria's 'Commitment to Peace'

JN3005162596 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1140 GMT 30 May 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Dear listeners: The elections held in Israel yesterday at the parliamentary and cabinet levels — to elect members of the Knesset and to chose the next Israeli prime minister — are more than just elections held for their own sake. They represent part of Israel's behavioral pattern during the nearly five years of the peace process.

About a year ago, the Israeli Government placed the peace process in a state of dormancy that lasted until the end of last year. This dormancy ended after U.S. efforts led to the resumption of the negotiations on the Syrian-Israeli track in the U.S. state of Maryland. In Maryland, the Israelis declared their intention to slow pace of the peace process — which was already slow to begin with — to await the results of the Israeli elections, thus enabling the Israeli negotiator to continue the talks based on the results of these elections.

Israel unilaterally froze the negotiations after the recent bombings. Yesterday's elections are part of the same pattern; in other words, they are part of the Israeli conduct throughout the peace process.

These elements lead us to a logical assumption: The Israeli elections are a means of preparing the Israeli society for peace. They are a means to educate the Israeli individual and society and teach them the principles on which peace is based: namely, the implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy, which stipulate a full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab lands.

This is the assumption dictated by the logic of peace. However, this is not the case. The two main opponents in the elections speak the same language of Israeli expansionist ambitions, with only very slight differences between the two. The two sides do not differ in kind as much as in degree. Both parties — that is, the Labor Party grouping and the Likud bloc — want to keep the occupied lands, either wholly or partially. They also want to dominate Arab water resources, wholly or partially. Both of them cling to the settlement activities, wholly or partially. We should take into consideration the fact that there is a very slight difference between the two parties over the concept of totality and partiality. There is no disagreement at all between the two parties on the future of Arab Jerusalem.

Based on the above, and as long as the Israeli elections are part of the Israeli behavioral pattern throughout the peace process, the Israeli elections so far have shown that genuine peace is not the main preoccupation of those participating in the elections. What the competitors in the these Israeli elections overlooked, is the fact that peace is not just an Arab need. It is an Israeli need as much as it is an Arab one, perhaps even more so.

Everyone knows that Israel is in dire need of peace, even if Peres himself had not declared this fact two days ago when he said: If the peace process stops, if the intifadah resumes, and if economic growth is suspended, then God only knows when we will be able to complete this march. This is what the head of the Israeli Labor Party said. This statement means that peace is a requirement and a necessity for Israel.

Many international quarters are trying to deduce the features of the next phase of the peace process by examining the Israeli elections. Syria, on the other hand, adopted peace as its strategic option, facilitated the start of the peace process, and has prevented the collapse of this process due to Israeli intransigence many times. The entire world can testify to the fact that Syria genuinely seeks a just peace and has tried to realize it. The world can also testify to the fact that Syria is the key to peace in the region.

From this premise, we in Syria believe that the international legitimacy resolutions — which stipulate Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Syrian, Lebanese, and Arab territories — should be binding on Israel. These resolutions await nothing but their implementation. They are not waiting to hear what one Israeli party or another thinks about them. Consequently, the only acceptable objective the Israeli elections is to formulate a new Israeli position that adheres to the Security Council resolutions, which constitute the basis of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

In brief, what Syria wants is for Israel to show a commitment to peace and its requirements that is similar to the commitment shown by Syria. This is what pushes the peace process forward and leads the region toward security and stability. Without guaranteeing everyone's rights and security, the cherished peace can never prevail. The foundation and the very essence of this peace is the land-for-peace principle. Occupation and peace will never meet.

Syria: AL-THAWRAH—Vote Shows Israelis 'Not Actually Interested in Peace'

JN3105110196 Damascus SANA in Arabic 0710 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 31 May (SANA)—Today's issue of newspaper AL-THAWRAH asserts that, as was acknowledged by the world and the political circles, the Israeli elections—along with all the factors that dominated them in terms of the libel campaigns, accusations between the two rival major parties and their leaders, and the pressures and threats against voters, as well as the clamorous and very extremist political platforms and promises—clarified the image of those in charge of Israeli policy.

In a commentary, the paper adds: We believe that the Israelis, regardless of their party ideologies, are not actually interested in peace as much as they are interested in continuing the policy of aggression and expansion and in adopting the option of force as a way to hold talks and dialogue and reject peace and its components, conditions, and terms of reference.

AL-THAWRAH believes that the Israelis elections are a theatrical production and another attempt to evade all commitments and completely avoid the issue of peace and its requirements.

Syria: Israeli Election Winner Urged To Keep Peace 'on Track'

JN3005203296 Damascus SYRIA TIMES in English 29 May 96 p 5

[Commentary by Walid Shihadah: "Twisted Logic"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Israelis today cast their votes to elect a new prime minister and new members to their parliament, the Knesset. And the security measures have been unprecedently tightened, the closure of Arab areas in the West Bank and Gaza which was clamped last February is further consolidated. The Palestinians are barred from movement into or out of the occupied Arab territories and the Israeli army, police and border guards are put in maximum alert. According to the spokesman for the Israeli police all Israel is in a state of alert. The army is deployed everywhere, so are the police. They say these measures are precautionary lest acts of violence occur.

The election campaigns before these polls were very hot, also in an unprecedented way. And the new method of electing the prime minister through direct vote by the people is being adopted in Israel for the first time. That is partly a reason for the hot campaigns and for the debate broadcast on the television by the two rivals competing for the post, Peres and Likud's Binyamin Netanyahu. Opinion polls conducted soon after the debate show that the difference in points between the two was very small, yet the election result would be open to all probabilities.

However, in their bids to win, the two tried to play the tune of peace and the security of Israel, nothing new was put forward. These are old stories that both the Likud of Netanyahu and the Labour of Shim'on Peres, have been telling all through the years Peres is in power. The question of Jerusalem was still a point of agreement between the two rivals. They talked about peace, each of them wanting it, but in the final analysis it remains the type of peace which is different from the peace sought through the process that started in Madrid on the basis of UN resolutions and the principle of land for peace. So the difference between them does not touch the heart of the matter, although Netanyahu has clearly expressed of his view of maintaining occupation of Arab lands, and keeping the Golan under Israeli control.

In this respect, Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' said clearly, "Those who claim that peace and security can be achieved while keeping the Golan and other occupied Arab territories are not advocate of peace, but advocates of war. Adopting this policy will certainly destroy the opportunities of peace." Occupation and peace are two opposites which can never meet. The way of Israeli thinking must change and the question of peace should be dealt with from the perspective that it should be permanent. For this goal, peace must be based on justice which requires the return of the occupied territories and usurped rights to their owners, the Arabs. In other words, occupation must end and the Israeli acts of harassment against Arabs, their acts of aggression and oppression must be terminated. The peace process must be safeguarded and must proceed on the track that was originally designed for it, i.e. the achievement of just and comprehensive peace built on Israel's withdrawal back to the lines of 4 June 1967.

Elections in Israel are a local issue. But in as much as these campaigns touch upon the question of peace, the concept of this peace must be made clear: that no peace can prevail if a single part of Arab lands remains under occupation. The winner, Peres or Netanyahu, will have to make up his mind whether to keep the process of peace with all its objective requirements on track, or to ruin it by holding on to occupation and perpetuating Israel's control over the land occupied by the use of force.

Syria: Press Stresses Commitment to Principles of Peace Process

JN3105082396 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0445 GMT 31 May 96

[Press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] Under the headline "Commitment to the Principles of Peace," AL-THAWRAH stresses in an article today that the Madrid peace process is based on the implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the U.S. land-for-peace initiative. From the outset, Syria has stressed its commitment to these bases and has constantly showed its eagerness to advance the peace process toward its goal, represented by a just, comprehensive peace. This requires Israel's full withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 lines, balanced, equitable security arrangements on the two sides of those lines, and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 425 on southern Lebanon. This has been constantly rejected by Israel, something that led to the current paralysis of the peace process.

The paper says that Israel ignores the bases of the peace process and commits aggressions against Arab territory, especially Lebanon. As part of its policy to impose its self-styled peace through partial solutions, Israel brought pressure to bear against Lebanon to force it to accept such solutions. The world is certain that such solutions are unfit to serve as a basis for the required peace and that there is no alternative to a just, comprehensive peace to which Syria and Lebanon adhere and seek to achieve sincerely and seriously. This is because only such a peace is capable of providing regional security and stability. Under no circumstances will Syria and Lebanon accept anything short of that.

AL-THAWRAH says: Peace cannot make its way into the region under continued aggression and occupation. Anyone who wants to find peace must accept its principles, which require ending occupation and returning rights to their legitimate owners. This is where the role of the cosponsors of the peace process, especially the United States, can be most effective in convincing Israel to change its policy on peace after the elections. We hope that the full U.S. partner will convince Israel to change its antipeace policy and comply with the will of peace, the UN resolutions, and the U.S. land-for-peace initiative.

In another article, AL-THAWRAH comments on the Israeli elections, which ended yesterday, pending the announcement of the final results to name the new prime minister and the party with the largest number of Knesset seats. Over the past decades, the Israeli elections have been used as a way to keep things undecided and escape many requirements. The elections have been used as a justification for not making crucial decisions and escaping any international pressure. The current elections are a game and another attempt to evade and shirk all commitments and completely circumvent the peace process and its requirements.

The paper calls for maximum pressure by the international community and the cosponsors of the peace process to return this process to its track and to deal decisively with the rulers in Tel Aviv, Likud or Labor, in order to force them to implement the resolutions of the international legitimacy and accept the land-for-peace principle.

Syria: 'Arab Official' Criticized for Supporting Israel

JN3005142896 Damascus SANA in Arabic
0720 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 30 May (SANA)—TISHRIN says it is astonished to see an Arab official from a neighboring country responding favorably to the rancorous Zionist calls and the falsehood campaign against Syria. TISHRIN says it is also astonished to see this official adopting and promoting all these Zionist calls, and even going further and encouraging Israel to take a more decisive policy against Damascus.

In an editorial by Chief Editor Muhammad Khayr al-Wadi, today's TISHRIN says: This Arab official claims that Syria is not serious about the negotiations and warns against Damascus' plans to establish Greater Syria. He did not forget to advise Israel and the United States to work on separating the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

The paper says that it does not want to discuss such claims. However, these claims twist the truth and ignore all the facts produced by the recent political developments in the region. Syria opened the door to regional peace at the Madrid conference. The Arabs know that Israel obstructed the Washington talks, suspended the Maryland negotiations, wasted time, and undermined all the chances for a successful end to the negotiations. Despite all this, that official says Israel is not responsible for sabotaging the peace process and adopts Tel Aviv's viewpoint, which claims that Damascus is not serious about the negotiations.

The paper says: Through long experiences, the U.S. and Israeli officials reached the firm conclusion that Syria is the key to comprehensive peace in the region and that security and stability in the region cannot be guaranteed without Damascus. It seems that certain parties do not like this fact. They, therefore, began to coordinate their efforts with Zionist diehards to encroach on Syria's position and to instigate others against it. They even became, on several occasions, a center of advise and expertise for Israel and the enemies of the Arab nation to fabricate more falsehoods against Syria and the Arabs. However, their expertise and efforts were of no avail. The plans to partition Iraq and push it into the Israeli sphere of influence also failed.

The paper adds: The voices of the Zionist diehards, which are being echoed by some officials in the region, will not change Syria's position. Damascus was the target of more ruthless campaigns in the past, but it has remained faithful to its pan-Arab principles. It will continue to struggle to provide the necessary requirements for a just and comprehensive peace that will return the occupied Arab territories and preserve the Arabs' dignity and freedom.

The paper concludes: We truly hoped that the rancorous Zionist voices against Syria and the Arabs would not be echoed by Arabs. We also hoped that efforts would be made to maintain what remained of the ties of kinship and closeness among the Arabs instead of directing efforts to severe these ties and provide secret channels for the Zionist octopus to enter into the Arab homeland.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Taleban Rockets Hit Kabul Following Reverses in Logar

LD3105090496 Tehran IRNA in English 0802 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, May 31, (IRNA) — Katyusha rockets hit Kabul on 30 May after a three-day halt, killing five civilians and injuring five others.

At least 25 rockets were fired at residential quarters and commercial centers of Kabul, destroying five houses and shopping units. An Afghan Government source said that some five rockets hit the compound of the presidential palace and two others the establishments of Amani High School, north of Kabul, causing minor damage.

Meanwhile, the security commission of Kabul said in an announcement that Taleban group had escalated shelling of the capital in retaliation for its 30 May defeat in Logar Province.

The Afghan Government forces and their allies, including Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party], on 30 May launched a massive offensive against Taleban militia in Logar Province and managed to liberate a vast area such as Kotal Sorkh, Mess-e Aynak Heights, and Aynak village. More than 130 Taleban forces were killed or injured in the attack.

Afghanistan: Iranian Paper Sees 'Glimmer of Hope' for Nation

LD3005125396 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 26 May pp 2-3

[Unattributed commentary: "Finally, a Glimmer of Hope for Afghanistan... But"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Borhanoddin Rabbani, leader of Afghanistan's Jam'iyat-e Eslami [Islamic Society] (HJE), and Golboddin Hekmatyar, the head of Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party] (HE), signed a six-point accord on 24 May ending the two group's long-standing disputes over governing the country.

Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, HJE's military strongman and 'Abdorrab Rasul Sayyaf, leader of Ettehad-e Eslami [Islamic Union] (HEE) were also present when the coalition accord was being signed, a strong indication that all concerned have given their blessings, however late, to a comprehensive new peace venture.

Considering today's power equation in Afghanistan, this new alliance could prove to be the most important determining factor in shaping that country's future.

There are, at present, five major military powers in Afghanistan:

1. Rabbani's coalition group which controls Kabul;
2. General Dostam's group in the northern part of the country;
3. Hekmaytar's Hezb-e Eslami;
4. Shi'a groups, mostly located in Kabul and in Bamian and Hezarajat Provinces;
5. Taleban group, stationed mostly in southern Afghanistan with is base in Kandahar.

The Shi'as recently split into two factions. One faction joined the Rabbani's group, while the other became part of Hekmatyar's organization. So, in effect, the two Shi'a factions are part of the new alliance between Rabbani and Hekmatyar.

The only military powers left out of the new alliance are the Dostam group and the Pakistani-backed Taleban who are at odds with each other over diametrically opposed ideologies.

There is, at present, no conceivable way in which these two groups could find a middle ground and come to terms with one another. And Dostam has deliberately avoided military confrontation with Rabbani and his supporters, thereby keeping his fighting force intact.

The Taleban remain the only powerful Afghan group capable or willing to prolong the civil war by creating problems for the newly created Rabbani-Hekmatyar alliance. Taleban responded to the new born alliance by rocketing Kabul Friday [24 May] killing more than 30 people. Taleban's belligerence continues, while their distasteful behaviour towards their own people, particularly towards women, has made them extremely unpopular all over Afghanistan. Analysts believe that time is against the former religious students.

Pakistan exercises great influence over the Taleban, and this new and positive development in Afghanistan increases neighbouring Pakistan's responsibility towards the resolution of the Afghan crisis.

While the two main opposing groups in the Afghan conflict have finally entered a coalition aimed at ending the war, any military-economic assistance from Islamabad to the war mongering Taleban with their Middle Age mentality is unacceptable and unjustifiable.

Afghanistan: Shiite, Sunni Ulema Urged To Establish Joint Shura

LD3005190796 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pashto 1230 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Enayatollah Shadab, secretary of the Jam'iyat-e Eslami [Islamic Society] of Afghanistan, calls on Shiite and Sunni ulema [religious experts] and clergymen to set up a joint shura [council] to jointly confront the conspiracies of international arrogance, including the criminal United States, and strengthen the spirit of fraternity among various religions in Afghanistan.

According to an IRNA report from Kabul, the secretary of the Jam'iyat-e Eslami spoke at a meeting of Shiite ulema and clergymen held in Kabul on Ashura day. He said that we should serve the war-stricken people of Afghanistan and bring peace and security with one another's help.

Hojjat ol-Eslam Khodadad Erfani, leader of Afghanistan's Shiite clergymen and deputy minister of endowment and guidance, also spoke at this meeting and said that Afghanistan's Shiite and Sunni ulema must set up a joint shura to bring peace and security and bring these religions closer together.

Afghanistan: Kabul Citizens Hold Anti-Mine Rally, March to UN Office

LD3005191496 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Today [30 May] Kabul citizens took part in a rally supporting the anti-mine campaign in Afghanistan.

A BAKHTAR correspondent reported that the marchers first took part in a condolence ceremony in memory of those killed by mines, which was held in the Shah-e Doshamshera Mosque. Then, in the form of a demonstration, the marchers chanted slogans against those manufacturing and planting mines. They marched to the office of the United Nations in Kabul. Assembling in front office, the marchers issued a resolution addressed to the UN Secretary General.

The resolution said in part: the Afghan anti-mine organization asks the United Nations and international society to take part in the humanitarian mine-clearing operation in Afghanistan and help the victims of mines.

India

India: PM, New Government To Finalize Program

BK3105051096 Madras THE HINDU in English 30 May 96 p 11

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Prime Minister-designate, Mr. H.D. Deve Gowda, tonight said that a minimum agreed programme for the new government was being drafted and it would be finalised by the leaders of constituent parties on Friday.

Mr. Deve Gowda, who arrived here to a tumultuous welcome, later told press persons that a three-member sub-committee had been entrusted with the task of drafting the minimum agreed programme.

Mr. Deve Gowda exuded confidence that the new government under his stewardship would run without any hassles and obstacles.

The Prime Minister-designate categorically stated that the Congress(I), which had extended its support to the UF [United Front] government, had not Imposed any conditions. The rumours that the Congress(I) had put conditions were baseless. However to a question, Mr. Gowda pointed out that whenever it was felt necessary to discuss with the Congress(I) some issues it would be direct one-to-one meeting.

Mr. Deve Gowda said that he would not wait till June 12 for seeking a vote of confidence as directed by the President while appointing him as the Prime Minister. He would take steps to convene a session of the Lok Sabha as early as possible. Mr. Deve Gowda said that he would consult leaders of all friendly parties on the formation of the Cabinet and he would give a final shape to it after consultations. He said that representation would be given for all regions keeping in view broad parameters like social justice and experience of persons.

About the economic and industrial policies, Mr. Deve Gowda pointed out that there might be doubts and also anxiety about the continuance of the policies as some States had already attracted foreign and domestic investments. The minimum programme and policy document would deal with such issues and formulate an agreed opinion.

Mr. Deve Gowda said that the fear or doubts whether it was possible to give a stable government were not baseless considering the past events. But he underlined that there was a lot of difference between the political events in the past and the political situation at present. They should not forget that the mandate of the people this time was for coalition governments. His feeling was that his government would run without any obstacles. The new government was one which had been formed with a clear idea and it was in consonance with people's desire for the beginning of an era of coalition government. Mr. Deve Gowda reminded that many gave only two months to his government when he was sworn in as the Chief Minister in December 1994. In his career he had faced many problems in shouldering responsibilities; He had full confidences or differences of opinion through mutual discussion and ensure the cooperation of all in finding solutions. He had taken the new task entrusted to him as a challenge.

Mr. Deve Gowda thanked all the leaders and others who had extended their cooperation to him during his stewardship of the State in the last 17 months. His successor was to be elected tomorrow and he would be submitting his resignation to the Chief Ministership tomorrow. He was planning to go to Delhi on Friday.

Mr. Deve Gowda explained at length the circumstances which catapulted him to the leadership of the United Front and to don the mantle of Prime Ministership. He took the stand that he would not come out of Karnataka. But he had to yield to leaders of National Front, friendly regional parties and Left parties and his party President, Mr. Laloo Prasad.

Mr. Deve Gowda said that he was pained to move out from Karnataka where people had blessed his party overwhelmingly in the panchayat, civic and parliamentary elections condoning their deficiencies. He would not say that they had been fully successful in solving some burning problems. The country was facing an uncertain political situation and for the first time an experiment in coalition government was being attempted. He was caught in a dilemma. The mandate of the people who has showed confidence in his party was there for three-and-a-half years more. The other was an uncertain political scenario in the country with the third force emerging and the Congress(I) extending its support. He was pained to leave the people who had reposed their confidence in him. He said there were capable leaders in the State and they had worked shoulder to shoulder. He was confident that they would shoulder the responsibility ably and live up to the confidence reposed in them by the people. He was leaving with that satisfaction and confidence.

Referring to Mr. Vajpayee's observations quoting excerpts from a speech he was purported to have made at a seminar, Mr. Deve Gowda said that he neither praised nor condemned the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh].

Mr. Gowda also referred to the observations that the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] might take the issue to the streets and fight, and hoped that the BJP would take the decision of the Lok Sabha sportingly and respect it.

To a question, Mr. Deve Gowda said that there was no question of roping in the Congress(I) into the government now. Asked whether he enjoyed a special kind of relationship with Mr. Narasimha Rao, Mr. Deve Gowda said that as Chief Minister, he maintained a cordial relationship with Mr. Rao and there was nothing more.

Responding to a question on differences with Mr. Rama Krishna Hegde, Mr. Deve Gowda said that Mr. Hegde had not distanced himself. He had given some suggestions. The UF government would keep them in mind.

India: Congress Leader Extends 'Full Support' to New Government

BK2905134096 Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 29 May 96 p 7

[Report by Janak Singh]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] With the fall of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] government on Tuesday former Prime Minister and Congress President P.V. Narasimha Rao is back to the centre-stage of national politics. The new government headed by H.D. Deve Gowda will not like to take any major decision without consulting him, a Congress Working Committee member claimed.

It is difficult to say what exactly will be the relationship between the United Front and the Congress with the latter supporting the 13-party coalition from outside. But there was relief in the Congress camp over developments which paved the way for the installation of the United Front government.

It was significant that Mr Rao met the president before Mr Gowda was invited to form the next government. Presumably, the Congress leader assured the president that his 136-member party in the Lok Sabha would extend full support to the new government.

A former cabinet minister close to V.P. Singh poohpoohed the suggestion that the United Front government would be "hostage" to the Congress, adding that the government would be fully independent and not tied to apron strings of any organisation or leader.

The Congress, he said, was supporting the government for its own reasons: "the party does not want an early election." "In my opinion," he added, "the Deve Gowda ministry could easily last over two years."

In the present situation, the Congress strength of 136 members in the Lok Sabha is not sufficient to make party leader Narasimha Rao the new prime minister. But Congress support is crucial to the 190-member, 13-party United Front which has been invited to form the government. According to informed sources, Mr Rao may play a key behind-the-scenes role in the new government.

Atal Behari Vajpayee made a sarcastic reference to the dependence of the United Front on the Congress in his reply to the debate on the trust motion. He said "now they — the United Front — will be running to you for every little thing," indicating that Mr Rao will be acting as a kind of patron-saint of the United Front coalition.

Earlier, following consultations with his senior colleagues, Congress president had handed over a communication to the president, promising support by the Congress to the United Front government headed by Mr Deve Gowda. Mr Rao and Mr Gowda have already discussed the relationship between the government and the Congress, according to sources in the Congress camp.

India: Congress Parliament Members Urge Rao To Join United Front

BK3105041796 Delhi THE ASIAN AGE in English 30 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] More than half of the newly-elected Congress MPs are putting pressure on party president P.V. Narasimha Rao to reconsider his decision not to participate in the United Front government.

Eager to taste power, the MPs are not convinced with Mr Rao's promises for the future. Various state MPs who have met Mr Rao over the past one week have been trying to persuade the party president into participating in the government. The common appeal has been not to let go of power by being an outside supporter to the United Front government.

The MPs who are fast emerging as a pressure group within the party are getting restless with the idea of the party going all out to support a United Front government in which they will have no direct role to play.

Another prominent concern of the MPs is that they are damaging their support base in the states without gaining anything at the Centre. Several state party units like West Bengal, Orissa, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh have already registered their protest against extending support to the United Front which is their main poll rival in the respective states.

Mr Rao has tried to reassure these MPs that extending support at the Centre will in no way detract from opposing the same parties in the states but the MPs are not prepared to buy this argument. In Orissa for instance, the Congress has 16 MPs while the Janata Dal has only three all of whom are likely to get berths in the Front Cabinet which is an obvious source of resentment for the Congress MPs.

Similarly, in West Bengal, the MPs have expressed apprehensions about cooperating at the Centre with the same party that they are fighting in the state. Though the CPI(M) [Congress Party of India (Marxist)] is not participating in the government, it is obvious that they are playing a leading role in setting it up.

The move has gained momentum with the various constituent parties of the Front like the DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] and AGP [Asom Gana Parishad] still indecisive over whether they should be a part of the government. In such a situation, the Congress MPs feel they have a fair chance to fill in the gaps in the Front government and be in the echelons of power.

India: DMK Leader Sees Rao as 'Backseat Driver' to New Government

BK3105035296 Delhi THE PIONEER in English 30 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Within 24 hours of Mr H D Deve Gowda being invited to form the government, the United Front lurched towards a crisis over ministry-making. Although difficulties in this regard were predictable, they were not expected to snowball into collective distancing from his yet-to-be-formed government.

Matters got seriously complicated on Wednesday when at least three major constituents of the Front — Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagham (DMK) and Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC) — indicated they would opt to stay out of the ministry.

A senior DMK leader went so far as to tell THE PIONEER tonight that his party was opposed to joining a "puppet government". The leader, a close associate of party supremo M Karunanidhi, said: "We do not want to be part of a government which has Narasimha Rao as the backseat driver. We do not know what conditions they have imposed on him (Mr Deve Gowda)."

His comments suggest that misgivings about the Congress's role persist among Front partners despite denials by the Congress and Left parties that they are trying to dictate terms to the Prime Minister-designate.

AGP leader Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and DMK leader M Karunanidhi, who appear to be firm in their decisions, are expected to be in the Capital on Thursday to hold discussions with the other leaders of Front.

Meanwhile, Mr Chandrababu Naidu, who is taking the initiative in persuading regional parties to participate in the government, admitted, "Yes, there is some hesitation (among regional parties)."

He said that was why he had convened the meeting with Mr Karunanidhi and Mr Mahanta, among others, to work out a common strategy and programme. "We are not interested in power. We are interested in programme; in consensus in the government. And, in more power for the States. I am working towards that."

Sources in TDP [Telugu Desam Party] said that if the DMK, TMC and AGP remained firm in their stance, Mr Naidu may reconsider his party's decision to join the government.

A close confidant of TMC leader G K Moopanar said, on condition of anonymity, "We want to see the composition of the Ministry before taking a decision. We want to see what kind of people are being appointed."

He said the party wanted to see people of "calibre" in six key political and economic ministries, identified as Home Affairs, Defence, External Affairs, Finance, Commerce and Industry.

He made it clear that they were opposed to any move to make Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav as Home Minister. "None of us relish the thought of him as Home Minister." And they shudder at the name of ministerial aspirants like Ms Phoolan Devi.

He justified TMC's claim for important berths by saying that after the Janata Dal with 43 MPs, TMC was the next largest constituent of the Front, since the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India (Marxist)] had already opted out. He pointed out that the SP had only 17 MPs. "Our claim cannot be ignored," he argued.

According to sources, the TMC was bargaining for the Finance portfolio for Mr P Chidambaram. It is widely known that he is extremely eager to hold this portfolio despite strong reservations apparently expressed by some of the Front's allies. Consequently, said UF [United Front] sources, the current ambivalence is being regarded as a "muscle-flexing exercise".

If the Communists and TMC adopted intransigent positions on this issue both may end up supporting the government from outside, thus reducing the actual strength of the government.

On the other hand, there seems to be rethinking in the Communist Party of India (CPI) about joining the government, although the CPI (M) is sticking to its decision not to share power at the Centre. The CPI executive will meet in the Capital on June 1 to take a final view on the issue.

Prime Minister designate H D Deve Gowda on Wednesday had a meeting with Congress president P V Narasimha Rao apparently to discuss about his plans. Later, he left for Bangalore leaving the crisis management responsibility to Mr V P Singh and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader Chandrababu Naidu.

Mr Deve Gowda is expected to return to the Capital only on Friday, a day before the swearing-in ceremony. He is in Bangalore to submit his resignation from the post of Karnataka Chief and install his successor.

India: 'Disarray' in United Front Camp Worries Congress

BK2905134696 Madras THE HINDU in English 29 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Having ousted the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government led by Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee and ensured the installation of the United Front [UF] government led by Mr. H.D. Deve Gowda, the Congress(I) has now turned its attention to the state of affairs in the UF and its impact on the Congress at the national level as well as in the states where it is pitted against the UF constituents.

According to sources, the Congress leadership is seriously worried about the "disarray" in the UF camp and, little progress on several contentious issues related to coordination with the Deve Gowda government.

A senior functionary of the AICC [All India Congress Committee] lamented that the UF leaders had literally squandered the opportunity since May 16 to "get their act together" and move towards the task of governance from June 1.

It is believed that so far the UF has not approached the Congress(I) with any concrete suggestions on the modalities and mechanism of cooperation between the two entities. The informal consultations among leaders of the Congress and the UF have not taken any concrete shape as the UF is yet to come to grips within vis-a-vis a number of complicated issues.

The Congress has noted with concern the decision of the UF to defer its decision to evolve a "common minimum programme" which shall be the basis of understanding among the 14 parties which constitute the Front.

"The question of nature of our outside support to the UF can be discussed meaningfully only if the Front is ready with its own much talked about common minimum programme," a member of the Congress Working Committee [CWC] remarked.

The Congress on its part has worked out a draft "of conditionalities" which would guide the party in giving of outside support to the Deve Gowda government. The draft is the result of a series of consultations between the Congress President, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, and the party MP's from various States and other senior leaders in the party.

Congress leaders admitted that the party was still in the process of convincing the various State units on the compulsions behind the decision of the CWC on May 12 and 15 to extend outside support to the UF government led by Mr. Deve Gowda. The tough line taken by some of the State units vis-a-vis the Deve Gowda government on certain issues is bound to complicate matters.

For instance, the unanimous view in the Uttar Pradesh [UP] Congress is that the party should pressure Mr. Deve Gowda to ensure that the Samajvadi Party leader, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, is not allowed to become the Union home minister under any circumstances. "The UP unit feels that if Mulayum were to become the home minister, the party will be totally finished in the State".

The Congress has also noted with interest the statement made by the DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] Parliamentary party leader, Mr. Murasoli Maran, that his party would like to wait to know the terms of understanding of the Congress for its outside support to the UF.

India: Congress Seeking To Exclude Samajwadi Leader From Cabinet

BK2905143896 Delhi THE PIONEER in English 29 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] With the exit of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] Government, the war of nerves between the Congress and the United Front [UF] has begun. Firing the first salvo, the Congress has expressed its reservations over the inclusion of Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav in the UF ministry.

While the Congress has sought to exercise a "veto" on Mr Yadav's appointment, the UF has scuttled a proposal to make Congress president P V Narasimha Rao chairman of a powerful policy coordination committee. This is aimed at checking former Prime Minister's all-too-evident plans to hold the "remote control" for the UF Ministry.

According to UF sources, the Congress has conveyed its perception that Mr Yadav's "hardline" image made him unacceptable as a minister with an important portfolio. Mr Yadav's appointment would provide the BJP with a strong propaganda point and the Congress was keen to deny the saffron party such an advantage.

The Congress' worries stem from the strong speculation that Mr Yadav was lobbying for a key portfolio such as the Union Home Ministry. The party was concerned that Mr Yadav might use his ministerial assignment with particular enthusiasm to push his agenda of sops for his political constituency of OBCs [other backward classes] and minorities, triggering polarisation in the process.

For Mr Rao, there are no threats looming immediately within or without the Congress. However, problems could begin to mount as the move for a coordination committee — piloted by Rao-loyalists — has run aground. Mr Rao himself has indicated that he is lukewarm about the formation of such a panel unless he heads it.

There have been clear signals from the UF leadership that it would not want to provide Mr Rao an opportunity to dictate terms as chief policy maker, signs of which are already available. This has put Mr Rao in a spot of bother as he has promised the Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) that the party will have a decisive say through coordination committees.

The Congress president has assured MPs that he would be able to protect their interests through the coordination committee. In fact, there is a strong demand that the party should insist on coordination committees at the state-level as well. The leader will now have to explain why this has not come about.

There is another point of vulnerability for Mr Rao is the pending threat of investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into his possible involvement in the Jain hawala case [money scandal] and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) MPs pay-off case. There are few guarantees available from the UF that the cases will be soft-pedalled in his interest.

There is speculation in the Congress that as Prime Minister, Mr Gowda may be tempted to borrow a line from Mr Rao and declare that the law "would take its own course".

It is pointed out that any effort to slow-down the investigation would create a problem for Mr Gowda within the Janata Dal as well as with the party's political constituency.

India: Outgoing Prime Minister Gives Farewell Statement

BK3105085696 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The prime minister says he and his party will extend its full cooperation to all those policies and programs of the next government that promote the interests of the country and the people. In his farewell statement to the press, released a short while ago, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee said the real challenge before all the political parties and politicians in the country is to create a conducive and supportive environment and cooperation amongst all the political parties. He said the BJP's [Bharatiya Janata Party] endeavor to strive for a wholesome all-party consensus on all vital national issues during its brief rule should not be seen as stemming from its weakness or isolation.

India: BJP 'Plans To Take Fight' to Streets for 'Clear Mandate'

BK2905132096 Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 29 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Having accomplished its first task of virtually launching an election campaign, televised live by Doordarshan, from the floor of the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] now plans to take fight to the streets to ensure a "purna janadesh" (clear mandate) for the party in the mid-term polls which "seems inevitable."

There was a mood of relief in the BJP camp after Prime Minister Anal Behari Vajpayee relinquished office. "I am a free man now," Mr Vajpayee told newspersons after submitting his resignation to President Shanker Dayal Sharma. But soon after, at the BJP parliamentary party meeting, leaders debated how long would the United Front government last. There was a general opinion that elections could take place either by the end of the year or early next year.

Party stalwarts told the meeting: "We may not be having majority in the Lok Sabha, but majority of the people in the country are with us. The United Front government would push the country towards instability and the government would not last for long."

It was decided at the meeting that party MP's should visit their respective constituencies and explain to the people the BJP's stand in Parliament and how their mandate has been dishonoured. The party functionaries would also expose the "negative attitude" of other parties in dislodging the single largest party.

Video cassettes of speeches made by MP's during the two-day debate would be prepared and shown all over the country to expose "how other parties had ganged-up to negate the mandate of the people." Also booklets of the speeches made by Atal Behari Vajpayee and other party stalwarts would be distributed among the public.

Although Mr Vajpayee said that BJP would not want a mid-term poll and the present Lok Sabha should complete its full term, Party President L.K. Advani said: "At the end of this whole chapter it is clear that the BJP has considerably augmented its support base and has come out with flying colors." Mr Advani also feels that the party took the right decision in accepting the president's decision to form the government.

Mr Jaswant Singh said the Lok Sabha debate has resulted in immense gain for the BJP. By getting the entire proceedings telecast, people all over the country have known that a great injustice has been done to the BJP, he added.

The party functionaries were told by Mr Advani that "during the 12 days in power we have earned the goodwill of the people and the image of the party has gone up. We have shown that we can form the government and run it too."

He said if the BJP would not have staked claim to form the government people would have misunderstood us and now all other parties stand totally exposed.

The party functionaries were told that with the "unholy alliance" of 13 parties in power the country was in to witness a "big tamasha [show]".

The BJP parliamentary board will meet here on Tuesday to take stock of the political situation after the resignation of the 13-day-old A.B. Vajpayee government.

India: BJP Reportedly 'Built Up' Files To Destroy New Government

BK3105040996 Delhi THE ASIAN AGE in English 30 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] is believed to have built up dossiers against Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav and some former Union ministers during their brief stint in power by taking a long and deep look at government files. They are now waiting to use this information at an appropriate moment to destroy the credibility of the government.

They also searched hard for any evidence that would hurt the former Prime Minister, Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao, in the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha case, but this search was fruitless. According to sources within the BJP, they were more successful in building a case against former communications minister Sukh Ram and former petroleum minister Satish Sharma. Mr Sukh Ram was the target of sustained attacks in Parliament for alleged favouritism in the handling of telecom tenders through the privatisation period.

The case that the BJP will seek to make against Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav deals with his apparent contacts with "Muslim fundamentalists," and is based on reports of the Intelligence Bureau which maintains a strict watch on the Iranian embassy. The IB [Intelligence Bureau] file on Mr Yadav in this context apparently reports two visits he made to the embassy. It is not much of a case, since there is no evidence of any financial or untoward transaction having taken place, but in the hands of suitably efficient media managers it can always sustain eight-column headlines and comment laced with enough question marks to create sufficient doubt in the minds of the voters.

More damagingly, there will also be an effort to connect Mr Yadav to Pakistan's ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence], which is the primary agency concerned with financing and promoting fifth column activities in India, particularly terrorism.

Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav is making a serious effort to become home minister in the government that will be sworn in on Saturday. If that were to happen it would be more grist to the BJP mill, since the charge of compromising the national interest would then be made at the Union home minister rather than only a former chief minister. Material from these files, photocopies of which are believed to be in the possess of the party, has been obtain largely from intelligence agencies who had to report to new home minister, Mr Manohar Joshi. As home minister he was totally within his rights to ask for the files.

The BJP has also been probing the urea deal with a Turkish company done by the Congress government, which has been briefly reported in the press. Absence of substantive details threw cold water on the story.

India: Article Faults CPI-M for Not Supporting Basu

BK2905154296 Calcutta ANANDABAZAR PATRIKA in Bengali 21 May 96 p 4

[Article by Suman Chattopadhyay: "As in 1757, Traitors Like Mir Jafar Have Been Seen in 1996"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Jyoti Basu's party colleagues who obstructed his path to becoming prime minister did a great favor to Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] leader Atal Behari Vajpayee, who was given the first chance by President Shankar Dayal Sharma to form a government. Many of those colleagues are behaving like know-it-all's and telling everyone that they knew the president would make this decision and this is why they did not agree with the proposal to join a federal government with Jyoti Basu as prime minister.

In other words, they want to say that even if Basu agreed to become prime minister, Sharma would have called Vajpayee to form the government and it would have accrued as much humiliation for Basu as it would have caused embarrassment to the Communist Party of India-Marxist [CPI-M]. They feel it was very prudent for Jyoti Basu to refuse to be prime minister despite his desire to.

It is not an exaggeration to say that it is never difficult for a crooked person to find excuses. It is true that following his predecessor Venkataraman, President Sharma gave Vajpayee the first chance to form a government. One can still say, however, that if Jyoti Basu was unanimously chosen by the Third Front for the prime minister's post, perhaps Vajpayee would have refused the invitation to form the government, or even if Vajpayee had been called by the president, Jyoti Basu could still become prime minister within a fortnight. If the leaders of the constituents of the Third Front could unite against the BJP under Deve Gowda's leadership, then they could have been more united under Basu's leadership.

The fact is that those in the CPI-M who suggested not joining the government and who voted at a party meeting to reject the request of V.P. Singh and other National Front leaders made their decision without predetermining who the president might call to form the government. The only reason for their opposition to joining the government, or Basu heading it, was their inherent opposition to the Congress. In other words, they thought a government under Basu would be dependent on the Congress for its survival, and consequently the CPI-M would face embarrassment in the three states of this vast country that it rules. Keeping this objective in view, they did not care if a communal force formed a government in Delhi and opted to keep no links at all with the Congress. It is this inhibition of some CPI-M leaders that blocked forever the chances of an eminent son of Bengal to become prime minister of India.

History has no place for hypotheses. It deals with what actually happens. Therefore, let us briefly discuss how history and future historians will evaluate the CPI-M's decision to not join the federal government and lead it.

There is no doubt that in the context of current events, history will identify Jyoti Basu as an unfortunate and weak Communist leader of Bengal. He will be called unfortunate because he missed the rare chance to become the country's prime minister near the end of his life. He will be called weak because despite being the most popular leader of the party, he failed miserably to guide the party along the correct path at a critical juncture of history. Instead of taking the leadership himself at a moment of crisis he allowed himself to be classified as an ordinary person among a horde of many other party comrades. One can say with firm faith that history, which is very ruthless, will never accord Basu the status of an unforgettable leader. Nor will he be accorded any comparable status in history.

The CPI-M's decision not to join the government will be viewed by history as a "Himalayan blunder." It was a blunder for two reasons. First, it is the first and foremost aim in politics to seize power. It would be natural, desired, and appropriate for a political party that rules only three states in the country to grab the opportunity to assume power at the federal level. Therefore, the question will now be raised why those who have no desire for power at the federal level are taking so much trouble and spending huge funds to run for the Lok Sabha elections. The second is that it was natural and logical for a regional party to take the opportunity to join the government at the federal level and thereby expand its strength and influence throughout the country. The CPI-M did not attempt to achieve either of these goals.

History will ridicule the CPI-M leaders for their inexpediency. They made the greatest blunder by refusing to accept the opportunity readily offered to them by others to assume power at the federal level. Those who equated the BJP with the Congress and those who branded the two parties as identical enemies and felt satisfied with this notion will be despised by history for lacking the capability to differentiate between two incongruous elements and thwarting the chances of forming a grand alliance against religious communalism when the time was right. If the configuration of the BJP and the Congress was really identical, then the Congress, like the leftists, would not have been so impatient to topple the BJP government at the first available opportunity. Similarly, the argument that the Congress should be shunned because of its economic liberalism is nothing but a crude attempt to conceal the identity of opportunists. The fact is that if Basu had become prime minister in place of Narasimha Rao, then he too would have been compelled to pursue the same path, as he is now pursuing in West Bengal.

What is most unfortunate and lamentable for Bengalis is that the group of imprudent and isolationist CPI-M comrades also included some Bengalis. Information trickling from the CPI-M's inner sources following this historic blunder makes it clear that if the CPI-M comrades from West Bengal had stood united behind Basu instead of Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury, he could have become prime minister. Throughout their political careers, these comrades accused the federal government of depriving the states. The question will definitely be raised in Bengal on what justification these comrades let the opportunity to seize the federal government go. Questions will also be raised as to how the CPI-M's Bengali comrades — who rank in the second class of leadership because of their incompetence in speaking English — could forget to support their own Bengali leader Basu. Perhaps it will be written in the history of the self-respecting Bengalis that as in 1757, traitors like Mir Jafar [ruler who collaborated with the British] were again seen in 1996.

India: Ethnic Violence, Terrorism After Elections Viewed

BK2905151096 Delhi THE HINDUSTAN TIMES in English 29 May 96 p 11

[Report by Ved Marwah]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The large-scale violence that has erupted in Assam after the elections should not have come as a surprise, and could have been anticipated. Both the Bodo Security Force and the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) have once again increased the tempo of ethnic violence and terrorism. The new Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) government led by Prafulla Kumar Mohanta had hardly taken over when the members of the Bodo Security Force struck in the Kokrajhar district against the Santhals. They have set fire to many villages and forced a large number of non-Bodo tribals and non-tribals to flee to safer areas. About 50 persons have already lost their lives and over one lakh are reported to have become homeless in the ethnic violence.

Suspected ULFA activists ambushed the car of Tinsukia Superintendent of Police, Ravikant Singh, on way to police headquarters and shot him dead along with his driver and two security personnel. An auto-rickshaw driver was also killed in this attack on 16 May 1996. At least 13 other security personnel who were following in an escort vehicle sustained bullet injuries. Two BSF [Border Security Force] constables were killed and six others injured on the same day in an explosion in the North-East Express train. The editor of an Assamese newspaper along with his son was shot dead the next day.

It is no different from what happened last time in 1991 when the Congress government under Hiteswar Saikia replaced the AGP government. The ULFA militant then kidnapped a number of persons, including senior government officials and a Russian engineer, who was later killed. The militants try to take advantage of the transitory period before the new government takes root and learns about the realities of the ground situation. The new leaders have to learn to stop mouthing populist slogans and putting the blame on the outgoing government. Instead they should send clear signal to the militants that they would deal firmly with all lawless activities.

The V.P. Singh government had to pay a heavy price in Punjab in 1990 for not realising this. With hindsight one can say that the situation in Punjab could have been controlled in 1990 itself, if in their irresponsible utterings the then rulers had not demoralised the security forces, and allowed the militants to make a comeback. The graph of violence in 1990 in Punjab shows a sharp increase in the number of terrorist cases in that year. They rose sharply from 846 in 1989 to 2,116 in 1990.

V.P. Singh had made a dramatic breakthrough by his most successful visit to Amritsar and his public meeting at Ludhiana in January 1990. The popular enthusiasm was beyond all expectations. I was a witness to this, as I had been sent to Punjab, as Special Secretary in the Union Home Ministry, to liaise with the Punjab officials about the security arrangements. It was apparent that the people were ready for a change. The then prime minister was mobbed by enthusiastic crowds wherever he went. He got down from his car at more than one place to mix with the cheering crowds on both sides of the road. It was an unbelievable site. The people expressed what they wanted in no uncertain terms. They wanted peace and an end to violence. The situation could have been turned around, but that did not happen. Why? Because the government by its unwise statements loosened its control over the situation.

The government made the fatal mistake of interpreting this popular acclaim as a signal for going soft against the militants. It put the security forces on the mat, instead of tightening its grip on the ground situation. K.P.S. Gill was still the Director General of Police, but he was not sure of the government support. It is not my case that the new government should ignore specific complaints of high-handedness against the security forces, but to malign the police or the army in public statements by the new political masters is like sending an invitation to the militants to increase their activities.

The fact that senior police and civil servants, including the director general of police and the chief secretary, went on leave even before the new government took over, does not augur well for Assam. While one cannot justify this act of senior civil servants, which amounts to desertion in a crisis situation, the new government in such States should also lose no time to reassure all the officers that there would be no political vendetta against any one of them.

The holding of elections in Punjab in June 1991 was an important watershed in the history of terrorism in that State. But it would be wrong to conclude that the revival of the political process was the only factor responsible for the improvement in the situation. If that were so, how is that the situation in Manipur and Nagaland has not improved in spite of holding many elections there? According to most reports and crime statistics the situation in these two States is worse than at any time since independence.

Anti-terrorism strategy has to include all those political, economic and social measures which would neutralise public support to terrorism. It should strengthen the security apparatus to make it more effective. But it is unlikely to succeed unless the legitimacy of the electoral process and the popular government is also established in the mind of the people. In Manipur and Nagaland incalculable harm has been done by partisan political manipulation in which the official machinery has been accused of blatant misdemeanours. The fact that the governor's role has not been above controversy makes the matters only worse.

The allegations of rigging of elections in J&K [Jammu and Kashmir] still wrankles in the mind of the people there. Therefore, an added responsibility falls on the Union Government for ensuring free and fair polls. It should give a future elected government all the support, irrespective of the facts which party would form the government. National interest should supersede the shortsighted partisan interests.

Dismissing a popularly-elected government for unjustified reasons, or by using the governor to contrive an artificial majority for the ruling party, robs the political process of its legitimacy. Unfortunately, such things have happened more than once in the States in the North-East and in J&K.

To hold parliamentary elections in J&K is a step in the right direction, but the outcome even after the electoral process is relatively peaceful is not going to produce any miracles. They have still to be followed by the Assembly elections, and a lot more work has still to be done to prepare the ground for the restoration of a popular government. The Punjab experience has clearly shown that the people accept a verdict even if the results are based on very small percentage of votes. But that is only if they perceive the electoral process as fair and impartial. The responsibility for the low turnout in the poll in Punjab in 1991 rested on the militants because of fear of gun; and on the Akali Party for ensuring a Congress victory because of its boycott. The situation would have been very different had the elections been rigged to ensure a Congress victory. The elections in J&K will not be illegitimate merely because they have been boycotted by the National Conference and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, and opposed by the militant groups through the fear of gun.

A popular government need not necessarily be a weak and indecisive government as the Punjab experience has shown. Both the Union and the State Governments have to understand their role and cooperate with each other irrespective of the fact which party heads the government in the State or at the Centre. One can only hope that the right lessons will be drawn from the situation in Assam, and the situation brought under control sooner than later.

India: TV Details Voting Percentage, Violence, Arrests in Kashmir

BK3105051496 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in English 1530 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Despite efforts by militants to disrupt the polling process, people today voted enthusiastically in the third and final phase of polling for the Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir. According to the Election Commission, 37 percent voter turnout has been reported from the Srinagar constituency and 52 percent from the Udhampur constituency.

Reports say militants fired rockets and hurled grenades at some places, but the incidents failed to dampen the spirit of the people. No loss of life has been reported in these incidents. [passage omitted]

People in militancy-hit Doda District gave a befitting reply to the militants by turning out in large numbers to vote. A beeline of voters could be seen at several polling stations. A large number of women also joined the queues waiting for their turn to vote. The percentage of polling in Doda has been put at 60. In some areas of the district, polling material was brought by helicopters. Arrangements have been made to airlift ballot boxes from these areas.

Two persons, including a civilian and a BSF [Border Security Force] jawan [soldier], were killed and another civilian and a CRPF [Central Reserve Police Force] constable injured in poll-related violence in Srinagar today. Tear gas was used three times to disperse groups of demonstrators in downtown Srinagar. Security forces had to resort to firing in the air once to preempt a law and order problem. Briefing newspersons on polling in Srinagar and Udhampur Lok Sabha constituencies, the home secretary, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, said there were six demonstrations involving people numbering 20 to 60. While militants resorted to firing and grenade throwing at Zadbal, Kamaldopura, Jamal Hawa, there was an explosion at Naidara. He said an inquiry has been ordered into the complaint that a PTI correspondent was manhandled by BSF personnel.

Mr. Padmanabhaiah pointed out that polling in militancy-affected Doda District was entirely incident free. He said incidents of violence were mostly confined to downtown Srinagar where the turnout was comparatively poor. Mr. Padmanabhaiah said today's polling figures and situation were remarkable in view of the 72-hour bundh [strike] call by the militants and rocket attacks on hotels, houses, polling staff, and appearance of posters and pamphlets threatening voters of dire consequences. He placed on record the government's appreciation of the contribution of the staff from the state as well as other parts of the country conducting the polls. Mr. Padmanabhaiah spoke to Doordarshan news on some aspects of today's polling:

[Begin recording] What is most interesting is that in Doda District, which is the most, what should I say, militant-infected area, the polling, perhaps, is one of the highest in the district and the polling is about 56 percent. In certain villages, from where some of the important functionaries of Hezbul Mujahideen have come or otherwise they are known for their militancy, the polling percentage is extraordinary. Now some villages....[pauses] There is a village called Babur, from where one of the important Hezbul Mujahideen functionaries comes, polling is 90 percent. In three other villages; in Seri, it is 85 percent; Sindra, it is 85 percent; Ligri, it had 95 percent. It's unusual. I mean, this shows the message is loud and clear, you know, that people are tired with militancy. [end recording]

On allegations of coercive voting, he said:

[Begin Padmanabhaiah recording] There is no truth in this at all. I can give you a dozen reasons. Variations.... [pauses] You see last time, on the 23d at least, there were 15 polling booths where there was a zero percent voting. Under some polling booths, the polling was some 3 to 15 percent, and there were some where the polling was as high as 65 percent in Uri and in Sangash in Anantnag constituency. Now, if somebody had to coerce, I mean, we wouldn't have empty polling booths, you know, and empty ballot boxes. [end recording]

The deputy election commissioner, Mr. Subhash Pani, told a press conference in New Delhi today that in Udhampur, the turnover was 52 percent this time as against 39.45 percent in the previous Lok Sabha elections. The lowest percentage of polling was 9 percent in the Idgah assembly segment of the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency and the highest was 62 percent in the Banihal assembly segment of the Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency. Mr. Pani said despite a strike call, state government employees reported for duty in large numbers and manned most of the polling stations. The election commissioner expressed satisfaction over the polling and excellent work done by the polling staff, police, paramilitary forces, and the people of the state. The counting for all the constituencies, except for Udhampur, will be taken up on the 1st of next month and counting for the Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency will be taken up on the 3d of next mont.

The Jammu police have arrested a hard-core militant of the Tehrikul Mujahideen outfit carrying with himself 5 kg of RDX [explosives] and other arms and ammunition. Our correspondent M.A. Wangu reports that the militant has been identified as Abdul Qayyum Garge alias Jameed. The militant has admitted that he was sent by Pakistan's Inter Service Intelligence, the ISI, to disrupt the election process in Doda and Srinagar.

India: Army Deployed in South Calcutta After Violence

BK3105022696 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0035 GMT 31 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In West Bengal, Army has been deployed in south Calcutta following incidents of sporadic violence in (Bhu Kailash) under the Iqbalpur police station. Two persons were killed and 30 injured, including the joint commissioner of the Calcutta police, Mr. Ramakrishna; when a group of about 600 people attacked a police station yesterday. The injured have been admitted to hospital. Forty people have been arrested. According to state Home Police Minister Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, the Army has been deployed in both pockets to control the situation.

India: Industry Looks at Possible UF Government With 'Equanimity'

BK2905131496 Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 29 May 96 p 13

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text]Industry has responded to the prospect of a United Front [UF] government at the Centre with equanimity. Industrialists are whipping up hope by counting positive aspects of the loosely-fabricated alliance.

UF prime ministerial candidate H.D. Deve Gowda's "pro-industry" image has encouraged businessmen to believe that the process of economic reforms will continue though in private conversations they admit that a brighter "ray of hope" is that the "motley crowd" government may not last too long.

"I am yet to see a common economic agenda of UF but we expect the reforms process to continue," says Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) president Shekhar Datta. "The concern is which economic area the new government focuses on. After talking with various UF leaders, my understanding is that they agree that infrastructure development needs immediate investment."

In Mumbai [Bombay], eminent jurist and ACC [Auxiliary Cadet Corps] chairman Nani Palkhivala said the fall of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] government was a "a sad development for the country." He expected business to be adversely affected, as "India would be perceived as an unstable democracy". "Foreigners may now be reluctant to invest in India, unless a national government cutting across party lines is formed," he added.

Tata Sons director S.A. Sabavala said: "A lot depends on the shape and form the new government takes, but business takes everything in its stride." Indian Merchants' Chamber president Atul Bhagwati felt it was important to avoid an immediate mid-term poll.

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) president Deepak Banker says the reform process was brought by the people and not by any government. So any government going against this will have to bid a farewell to being in power.

Despite the confidence in the continuation of economic reforms, industry expects a slow-down in the flow of foreign investment. Janata Dal [JD] leader Jaipal Reddy had told industrialists at the CII annual conference two months ago that a JD government would not welcome foreign investors in the infrastructure sector. Mr Datta is, however, not perturbed, "I don't remember him saying so but this must be his personal views. I believe UF leaders are not opposed to encouraging foreign investment in infrastructure development."

Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham) Secretary-General V. Raghuraman says Indian businessmen will soon have to get used to coalition governments. "I don't think we will have a single party rule for some years. Coalition governments in Italy have not affected its economy.

Further, liberalisation is giving economic autonomy to state governments and very soon they will have to seek the Centre's approval for very few things. So the Central government will have a limited role to play in economic development."

A senior CII member, requesting anonymity, said industry is "most worried" about the UF's tendency to announce populist measures. "This will adversely affect the fiscal deficit."

This worry is echoed by Assocham deputy secretary general and chief economic advisor S.R. Bharucha who says, "Some organisations are farmer friendly, some are urban-friendly. How transfer of resources (subsidies) are handled will make a difference to the economy. Further, even if UF allows foreign investors to come in, the question is whether they would be interested, or would prefer to wait and watch?" Samsung India Electronics Ltd deputy managing director R.K. Caprihan said, "We do not expect drastic changes in the liberalisation policy because the new government will be supported by the Congress."

India: Government Fall Not 'Welcome Sign' for Industrialists

BK2905134896 Delhi THE ECONOMIC TIMES in English 29 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] It's summertime and most industrialists are beating the heat of an Indian summer in cooler international climes. For those who are here, the resignation of a 13-day-old BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] ministry seems quite inevitable, though for many it is not a very welcome sign of the times to come.

Eminent jurist and chairman of ACC [Ahmedabad Chamber of Commerce], Mr Nani Palkhivala, is disappointed at the manner in which politicians put their interest ahead of the country's. "In these days of democracy the politician comes first, the party second and the country nowhere," he complained.

On top of Mr Palkhivala's worries is the confusion that is likely to come out of the alliance of a mixed set of political parties with very little in common in terms of programme and ideology. "There is no common philosophy and though coalition governments are inevitable under the present conditions, the UF [United Front] government hold out little hope for a stable future," he said.

Even the Bombay Club heavyweight and managing director of Bajaj Auto, Mr Rahul Bajaj, seemed apprehensive. While the economic policies of the new government would to some extent depend on the new finance, industry and commerce ministers, Mr Bajaj said he would feel more confident if Mr P Chidambaram was given the finance portfolio.

He pointed out that while a UF government may not be supportive of big companies, it would be wise for the corporate sector to adopt a wait and watch policy.

The chairman of SRF Limited, Dr Bharat Ram, hoped that the economic policies of the new government would not be changed. If policy changes were effected, it would only hurt the country, he stated.

According to Dr Ram, the need of the hour was a stable policy framework and not only a stable government. He hoped that the Congress would play a dominant role in this regard.

Not everyone in corporate India has a low opinion of the UF government, however. Mr Venugopal Dhoot, chief of Videocon group, said: "I do not think business should be unduly worried. The economic reforms are universally accepted and if Mr Deve Gowda's record in Karnataka is anything to go by, then the industry need not worry. We must wait and watch."

And, while the HCC [Haryana Chamber of Commerce] chairman, Mr Ajit Gulabchand, feels the change in government will create a cloud of uncertainty, he does not see the liberalisation process as much of an issue with the new government.

Iran

Iran: U.S. Opposition to Iran-Europe Relations Seen

NC3105120596 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 23 May 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Germany, EU Must Decide for Themselves"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The German Chancellor Helmut Kohl is to meet Bill Clinton in Milwaukee, Wisconsin today. Clinton is likely to take up the issue of the EU's trade with Iran with the German Chancellor.

In order to wage a war of nerves and prepare a ground for influencing Germany's stand towards Iran, U.S. officials have launched an anti-Iran campaign, reiterating the same baseless accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran which they have been levelling since the collapse of the monarchy in 1979.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, whose personal animosity against the world of Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran is well-known, and White House spokesman, Michael McCurry, have begun to repeat the same nonsensical accusations.

Christopher has been incessantly levelling the following baseless charges: Iran is out to undermine the Middle East peace process; Iran is trying to procure nuclear weapons; Iran sponsors terrorism.

Before Clinton's visit to Moscow last year, he claimed that he had enough evidence to convince the Russians of Iran's nuclear intentions. But he returned empty-handed because, apparently, what he carried was not convincing enough.

It will not be the first time the Clinton administration tries to "evince and pressure a European country to follow its line. But Europe has so far proved to be wise enough not to be entrapped by Washington's ploy of politicizing issues for its own ends."

Washington has realized that U.S. companies have been the main losers in the game of imposing an embargo on Iran. Clinton is, therefore, trying to encourage other countries to join the embargo to reduce domestic pressure on his government.

In today's talks between Clinton and Chancellor Kohl, it is the reliability of Germany as a trustworthy ally of

Third World countries which is at stake. In the post-Cold War era, the Third World counts on Germany and other influential members of the EU as a reliable partner.

Iran: German Ambassador Notes Disapproval of U.S. Trade Embargo

LD3005104996 Tehran IRNA in English
0823 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Rasht, Gilan Prov., May 30, (IRNA) — German ambassador to Tehran, (Horst Beshmann), said here Wednesday [29 May] that his government does not approve the U.S. trade embargo against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Making the remark in a meeting with Governor General of this northern province, 'Ali Akbar Taha'i, the ambassador said that German Chancellor Helmut Kohl has reiterated this stance in his recent meeting with the U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Taha'i voiced the province's readiness to cooperate with Germany in various economic fields and to host German tourists. (Beshmann) also visited different parts of the province on Thursday.

Iran: New Railroad Derails U.S. Embargo Viewpoint

NC3005134596 Tehran SALAM in Persian
21 May 96 p 12

[M. Veysi commentary: "Political Impact of an Economic Project"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Last week, the Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan railroad was inaugurated in the presence of high-level political and economic figures from over 50 countries of the world. This railroad shortens the trade routes of scores of Asian and European countries. With the savings that will be accrued thereby it is being considered an important multinational economic project.

Correspondingly, the effects of the project on the region's political issues and even on international balances merit attention. These effects, which can be viewed from a better perspective in the aftermath of the inauguration, are decisive and of immense importance for both Iran and the Central Asian countries.

Decrease in Russia's Political and Economic Power Over Central Asia:

One of the basic problems of the newly independent Central Asian countries after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the immense dependence of their economic systems on the economic fortunes of Russian society. These countries were mired in an extreme kind of political and economic dependence on Moscow due to the center's (Moscow's) predominance over the satellites (all the Soviet republics) over the Soviet economy. [passage omitted]

Hence, anything that can extricate the aforementioned countries from political and economic dependence on Russia and help them break out of its orbit will be welcomed by them. It is precisely for this reason that the Central Asian peoples are very pleased the Central Asian-Persian Gulf railroad has become operational. Not only will it provide them with better trade opportunities for their own development, but their political systems will also enjoy greater independence.

Despite the diplomatic considerations being voiced by Russia, the functioning of this railroad cannot be very welcome for the Russians. This rail link was planned and built at a time when they were moving full-speed toward the West, thinking that it would be the panacea for all their woes. However, the failure of Russia's policy of closeness to the West to solve its ills once again focused Moscow's gaze on Central Asia and Primakov's policy of "Eyes to the East." At the current juncture, Central Asia does not offer the same favorable conditions for Russia's monopolistic aspirations as it did before.

Reduced Vulnerability of Iran's Foreign Relations:

In recent years, there has been an ongoing politico-economic tug-of-war and confrontation between the United States and Islamic Iran, based on Washington's efforts to isolate Iran by forbidding all countries from forging political and economic relations with it. The intensification of the U.S. embargo against Iran at the beginning of last year, which can be considered a turning point in the Washington hierarchy's moves, threatened Iran's trading partners.

Following this tightening of the embargo against Tehran, the European Union [EU] and its relations with Iran assumed a distinctive position in Iran's foreign policy. The United States wanted the EU members — which are considered its traditional allies — to enter into a politico-economic coalition with it, but the Europeans had no inclination to do so in view of their own national interests and the profits accruing from their political and economic relations with Tehran.

However, a point that merits attention here is how the Europeans are capitalizing on this situation. Increased political pressure on Iran within the framework of a critical dialogue, and efforts to extract concessions from Iran has became the mainstay of their policy. Even though some European officials have claimed that Europe was counterbalancing Washington's pressure on Iran, and despite the fact that some officials in our diplomatic apparatus agreed with this view and still do so, the fact is that by imposing itself between Iran and the United States, Europe has generated a sense of competitiveness among its countries with regard to their relations with Tehran.

The EU members' obstinacy on the issue of the apostate [Salman] Rushdie, the German judicial authorities' issuing of orders to arrest our country's information minister, the dispatch of the "troika" to Iran at the beginning of this year, and the EU delegates' raising of unacceptable requests for Iran to condemn the rightful struggles of the Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement], Islamic Jihad, and Hizballah movements — these were all indications of unacceptable sentiments in some of the EU member countries which it was necessary to change. In such circumstances, it was essential for the EU to realize that just as Islamic Iran could not be brought to its knees by U.S. embargoes, it would not bow down to the malevolent moves of some of the EU members, which they sought to justify because of U.S. pressure on Europe to isolate Iran.

One of the more principled ways of derailing the U.S. plan to isolate Iran and the EU's intentions to gain privileges was the broadening of Iran's relations with the PRC and Russia, which are two great world powers. In fact, the inauguration of the new railroad between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf will in a way insure that in the event of greater pressure by the United States and a more demanding attitude by the EU, Iran will not be trapped. [passage omitted]

In conclusion, the inauguration of the new railroad will provide Iran with the ability to obtain technology it needs from the PRC and Russia that the United States would not wish Iran to have and for which the Europeans are demanding an unacceptable political and economic price. The Central Asia-Persian Gulf railroad will now force the EU to attach greater importance to Iran.

Iran: UK Foreign Secretary's Trip to U.S. Viewed

LD2905135996 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 29 May 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] For the first time following his post as the British foreign secretary, Malcolm Rifkind has left for a visit to the United States today, Wednesday 29 May.

He will meet and talk with the U.S. President Bill Clinton and the U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher about issues of mutual importance and regional and international developments.

The most important issue expected to be raised at these talks is the U.S. Congress's decision of economic sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, Libya, and Cuba. Based on a recent (?act) passed by the U.S. Congress, foreign companies engaged in economic activities with Iran, Libya, and Cuba will be punished by the United States. Washington's unilateral decision has worried U.S. allies in the EU, including Britain.

This is why it is believed that the British foreign secretary is going to Washington to voice the EU's opposition to the U.S. policy of punishing foreign corporations subject to this law — a move that will probably effect Washington's relations with its European allies.

According to political analysts, the British diplomatic efforts related to the issue are not rooted in that country's concerns about the economic conditions in the three U.S. boycotted states, rather they are connected to Britain's worries about British economic and trade interest being endangered in those three countries.

After three years interruptions, Britain has been continually expanding its economic relations with Cuba since 1993. The stepping up of the Cuban sanctions by the United States has made British traders seize the opportunity and enter the Cuban consumer market more actively.

Aside from the differences between the EU and the United States over the intensification of the U.S. economic sanctions against Iran, Libya and Cuba, it seems that the British foreign secretary has gone to the United States as a EU representative too. Issues of mutual importance such as Northern Ireland crisis and its future elections are also expected to be raised during Mr. Rifkind's discussions with the U.S. officials, even though a clear-cut agreement on this point is not particularly in sight at the moment.

Despite all this, for now we must wait and see before any definite conclusion can be drawn out of the British foreign secretary's visit to the United States.

Iran: UK Criticism of U.S. Iran Policy Viewed

LD2805220196 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 28 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind has attacked the United States for imposing sanctions against foreign companies dealing with Cuba, Iran, and Libya.

In an article in the WASHINGTON POST, the British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind has announced his opposition to the sanctions adopted by the U.S. Congress and supported by Clinton.

The British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, who is to leave for Washington tomorrow, will discuss the issue with President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and members of Congress.

The U.S. allies are angry about unilateral American foreign policy decisions and have accused the U.S. Government and the U.S. Congress of trying to impose its will on other countries and of violating international agreements. The European Union and Parliament on 24 May criticized the United States for trying to extend its sanctions against Cuba and to adopt similar measures against Iran and Libya.

Iran: Editorial Warns UK Not To Adopt U.S. Policy

LD2905071696 Tehran IRNA in English
0657 GMT 29 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 29 (IRNA) — An English daily said Wednesday it was not advisable for Britain to follow the anti-Iran policy of the United States as this would not be in the interest of London.

Commenting on the statement of the British Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Nicholas Soames, who said that Iran "appears hostile to the stability of the region," the TEHRAN TIMES noted that historically, the United Kingdom has not been very friendly with Tehran.

"At a time when all members of the European Union (EU) unequivocally stress Iran's crucial role in maintaining peace and regional security, Soames, whose obedience to washington is crystal clear, repeats what the United States has been baselessly alleging over the past years," it stated.

Remarking that Western countries try to project Iran as a threat to encourage arms sales to regional countries in an effort to recycle petro-dollars, the editorial said that fortunately, most of the countries in the area have realized that the Islamic Republic is the main advocate of regional peace and security.

Stressing that Britain had better not follow the way the Americans have chosen as adopting a hostile attitude is not in London's interest, it concluded, "the United States is a good example if British politicians are wise enough to take a lesson."

Iran: Bosnian Serb Financial Aid to British Conservatives Viewed

LD2905203596 Tehran ABRAR in Persian
23 May 96 p 12

[Article from the "View" column by A. Niamanesh: "A New Scandal for the British Conservative Party"]

[FBIS Translated Text] British news sources have reported that the Conservative Party received financial aid from Bosnian Serb businessmen between 1992 and 1994, that was at the height of the clashes in Bosnia. According to other reports, Major's government collected the aid from Serbian businessmen to send to Bosnian Serbs.

First of all, regardless of whether the Conservative Party received the aid to finance its own operations or to send to Bosnian Serb leaders, it is certain to expose Britain's advisory role in the Balkan crisis. Therefore, under the present circumstances, such an exposure is noteworthy.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress that while exposing the matter, news and political circles in London have very easily overlooked another important issue. That is — in any case the Conservative Party, meaning Major's government, supported the Serbs throughout the Balkans crisis — whether it accepted financial aid from the Serbs as a bribe for supporting the Serbs' stand in international forums, or whether Major's government collected financial aid from Serbian businessmen to send to Bosnian Serbs. Therefore, what is important is the effect of the actions of the Conservative Party in prolonging the Balkan crisis and increasing the killing of Bosnian Muslims by the Serbs. These actions took place while the Vance-Owen plan was in progress, and Major's government was involved in an advisory capacity to bring the plan to fruition. Now it has become clear that the main reason for the failure of the British plan was London's taking sides with the Serbs.

Meanwhile, exposure of London's aid to the Serbs has shown that, in spite of the fact that any direct contact between international forums and the Serbs was forbidden without the knowledge and permission of the United Nations, the British authorities had contacts with Serb leaders without the UN's knowledge.

Furthermore, exposing Britain's support for the Serbs less than a year before the British general election has severely damaged the Conservative Party's weakened position relative to the rival Labour Party. The actions of Major's government in the Balkans have been criticized by the British public to the extent that no matter how much his government tries to increase the popularity of the Conservative Party in the short time remaining, it will not be all that successful.

What is significant, in the exposure of London's aid to the Serbs, is that it was done by the Labour Party within the context of the political battle and party rivalry. Keeping secret the Conservative Party's financial sources has always been criticized by the Labour Party, and Labour has accused the Conservative Party of financial corruption. The Labour Party's emphasis on the financial corruption of the Conservative Party and its receiving financial assistance from the Bosnian Serbs, without any reference to the effects of Britain's assistance to the Serbs to confront Bosnian Muslims, shows that the Labour Party also supports the Serbs, and for that reason it has overlooked the matter.

Iran: Editorial Views 'Misery' of Life in Bosnia

LD2505151496 Tehran IRNA in English
0901 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 25 (IRNA) — A morning daily Saturday wrote that millions of people forced from their homes by the three-and-a-half years of bitter war in Bosnia live in misery.

A wall of threats has been built along the dividing line formed by the Bosnian peace deal between the Muslim and Croat Federation and the Bosnian Serb Republic, preventing nearly all passage between the two by local people, KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL added.

The threat of arrest has stopped nearly all movement across boundaries, it stressed, noting, "it would seem all is back to the war atmosphere, not of fighting, but of fear."

Bosnian Serbs move to and fro into Muslim-controlled areas but practically no Muslim dares venture into Serb territory following the atrocities inflicted on Muslims during the destructive fighting, the editorial noted.

The right to travel freely around Bosnia is very important, and without it, there can be no fair elections or any return of refugees to the homes from where they were ejected.

These factors are essential in preventing Bosnia from becoming no more than a package of separate and hostile Muslim, Croat and Serb areas, the daily concluded.

Iran: Deputy Foreign Minister on Ties to Norway

BR3005085996 Oslo AFTENPOSTEN in Norwegian
29 May 96 p 7

[Report on interview with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Va'ezi by Morten Fyhn in Tehran; date not given: "Norway Has Hostile Attitude"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Tehran — For the first time since the assassination attempt against Nygaard [Norwegian publisher of Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses"] in the autumn of 1993 and the subsequent diplomatic cold front between Norway and Iran, a high-ranking representative of the regime in Iran has spoken out to give his version of the conflict between the two countries. In this exclusive interview with AFTENPOSTEN in Va'ezi's office in Tehran, he also gave an account of Iran's conditions for better relations with the United States, as well as developments in the ongoing dialogue with the EU.

[Fyhn] Why are does Iran have worse relations with Norway than with most other European countries?

[Va'ezi] The main reason is that the Norwegian Government and sections of the mass media are influenced by Israel.

[Fyhn] Do you think that AFTENPOSTEN is?

[Va'ezi] We will see when this interview has been printed. [Va'ezi ends]

He is not as brusque as he sounds. Our 90-minute conversation was very cordial. We drank tea and exchanged pleasantries about out stay in the country. Mahmud Va'ezi speaks excellent English, but for reasons of protocol, he answered first in Farsi and had an interpreter tranbslate. Only when he became very excited or thought he had said something very important, did he switch to English. He smiled often with a glint in his eye, and it often seemed as if he was amused by our persistent attempts to get him to say something nice about Norway.

[Va'ezi] It is true that we were the first to withdraw our ambassador. We downgraded relations with Norway and brought economic relations down to a minimum. We did that because the Norwegian Government adopted an unfriendly attitude toward Iran. As long as this policy continues in Norway, there is no reason for us to reactivate relations.

[Fyhn] So you do not want dialogue with Norway, only with the EU?

[Va'ezi] Right. We do not believe there is any point in talking to Norway. It was not even easy for me to grant you this interview. But I was pressured into it, because you are a guest in our country and have travelled a long way. [Va'ezi ends]

Va'ezi repeated several times that he thinks the Norwegian Government and the media are very one-sided on Iran. He thinks the hostility is so great that he does not believe there is any point in doing anything about it.

[Fyhn] But I assume you are acquainted with the reason why Norway's relations with Iran are so bad? It was an attempt to kill the Norwegian who published Salman Rushdie's book, and most people in Norway tend to think that Iran was behind the assassination attempt.

[Va'ezi] That was just an excuse from the Norwegian side.

[Fyhn] What do you think was the real reason?

[Va'ezi] The main reason was pressure from interest groups in Norway. What has it got to do with Iran that there was an attempt on the life of this publisher? After all, Norway's own investigation has been unable to prove any connection with us. This has also been said publicly in Norway. So the assassination attempt was just an excuse and not a reason to assume a hostile attitude toward Iran.

[Fyhn] So you are assuring me officially here and now that Iran was in no way behind the attempt on Nygaard's life.

[Va'ezi] Yes, absolutely. I do not say this to improve relations with Norway, but in order to make clear to the Norwegian public that Iran has no intention at all of creating problems for any country in the world.

[Fyhn] By that, are you also saying that the fatwah (death sentence) will not be carried out in Norway or other countries?

[Va'ezi] What I am stating is the official Iranian position on Rushdie. [Va'ezi ends]

At the same time, he also made clear that the fatwah is to be seen as a religious sentence from the highest religious authorities in Iran.

[Va'ezi] The fatwah is still in effect. It cannot be lifted by any government. But the government's position is completely clear: It is not Iranian policy to decide to send commandos or anyone else to another country to kill anyone.

[Fyhn] Bearing in mind the burden the fatwah has become for Iran, do you wish it had never existed?

[Va'ezi] No. [Va'ezi ends]

The deputy foreign minister has no doubts about what is required if Norway and Iran are going to be on speaking terms again, as Iran is with the EU: "We must receive signals from the Norwegian Government that there has been a change in today's unfriendly attitude. If we receive such signals, we will react to them, because any improvement must be reciprocal," he said.

[Fyhn] What do you actually mean by saying that the government in Norway is unfriendly?

[Va'ezi] I could remind you of what your foreign minister said in the national assembly recently. These were not friendly words from Norway. [Va'ezi ends]

Va'ezi was referring to Bjorn Tore Godal's statement in the Storting in January, when he said the following: "Norway cannot have normal relations with Iran as long as the Iranian authorities do not in word and deed dissociate themselves from the fatwah with its completely unacceptable violation of generally recognized human rights principles and the most fundamental norms of international law concerning relations between countries."

[Va'ezi] I can give another example of the unfriendly Norwegian attitude. The Norwegian parliament was the first in the world to receive one of the leaders of the Iranian opposition abroad. She was allowed to speak with leading politicians, and your newspaper and others gave her considerable publicity.

[Fyhn] Are you referring to Maryam Rajavi's visit last autumn? I did not meet her myself.

"You do not miss anything," Va'ezi said, laughing loudly. His point was that Rajavi has been granted asylum in France in exchange for a promise not to engage in political activity. He could not understand why Norway would receive a representative of an organization which engages in terrorist activity in Iran.

[Va'ezi] How are we to understand this when Norway says it is against terrorism? This not something which I claim. Even the State Department of our arch enemy, the United States, lists her organization among terrorist organizations. The EU does the same. And in their own publications, they boast of their assassinations and terrorist actions in Iran.

[Fyhn] What would it take for Iran and the United States to start talking to each other again?

[Va'ezi] As long as the United States maintains its hostile policy toward our Islamic republic, we have no wish to improve relations. Before the revolution the United States had great influence in Iran. After it the United States adopted a hostile attitude and even shot down an Iranian passenger plane. [Vaezi ends]

He avoided mentioning the American hostages in the embassy in Tehran.

According to Va'ezi, the U.S. economic boycott of Iran has had no affect apart from hitting U.S. companies. "The day will come when the United States finds out that it must relate to Iran on the basis of respect for the principles and values of the Islamic republic."

[Fyhn] The United States has repeatedly accused Iran of being behind international terrorism. Is this true?

[Va'ezi] Iran's antiterrorist policy is clear. We condemn all terrorism.

[Fyhn] So you do not support the violent actions of Hamas and Hizballah?

[Va'ezi] We condemn any terrorist action, regardless of which side it comes from. As far as Hizballah is concerned, our relations with them are political in nature. It is wrong to call Hizballah a terrorist group. It is a political party. [Va'ezi ends]

The deputy foreign minister pointed out that Iran has been accused of being behind bombings in Argentina, the United States, and other countries, but that the investigations subsequently showed that the charges were without foundation. On the subject of the fact that a German court has issued a warrant for the arrest of the Iranian information minister, he replied simply that the case is continuing in Germany.

As far as the current dialogue between the EU and Iran is concerned, Va'ezi said that the aim is to increase understanding between the parties.

He believes that the dialogue is going well and said that the parties are agreed in principle on the Rushdie affair, but added that Great Britain is blocking the matter. He did not rule out that Iran could issue a written declaration on Rushdie, but he stressed that this would have to happen in the context of a broader solution to outstanding problems.

Iran: Regular Flights Between Tehran, Stockholm To Begin 5 Jun

LD2905182696 Tehran IRNA in English 1659 GMT 29 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 29, IRNA — A regular flight will be established between Tehran and Stockholm from June 5, announced Airline of Islamic Republic of Iran on Wednesday.

There will be one regular flight between Tehran-Stockholm every Wednesday and Stockholm-Tehran every Thursday.

The new flight route will facilitate travel to northern Europe, the U.S. and Canada.

The airline of the Islamic Republic of Iran is also planning to initiate flights to African countries as well as Bangladesh in the near future.

Iran: Paper Comments on New Indian Government

LD2805195396 Tehran KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL in English 23 May 96 p 2

[Editorial by Zahra R.: "Indian minorities"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The accession of India's first Hindu nationalist government has sparked fears of religious tension in this country of 930 million with a broad range of religious and communal affiliations.

India's minorities, including more than 120 million Muslims, could find their identities threatened if the new Hindu nationalist government fulfils an election vow to remove their special protections.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party, BJP) government, installed last Thursday [16 May], has been given until 31st May to prove a majority by winning a vote of confidence after election produced a hung parliament.

There are no guarantees it would survive, but if it does, a BJP-led government would fill minorities such as Muslims and Christians with dismay.

There are many who believe that BJP government is a threat to the very social fabric of Indian society. It is committed to a uniculture nation — one nation, one culture.

Minorities' fears could become real only if the BJP goes ahead and implements its poll promises of imposing "Hindutva" or Hindu cultural nationalism.

Implementing Hindutva would mean doing away with differing civil code for India's three main religions and the Minorities Commission that safeguards the interests of cultural and educational institutions run by minorities, implying if minorities have to stay in India, they must consider themselves as one cultural entity.

However considering the influence of regional parties, whose support BJP needs to survive, it may be forced to temper its views on Hindutva.

The BJP and its allies do not have a majority in the lower house and would have trouble luring more support because of its perceived bias against religious minorities. Hence it would have to enter a moderate phase to survive in parliament... to restrain its original agenda.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the BJP leader, a moderate face of an extremist party, who was sworn in as prime minister, admits that in a coalition government the BJP will have to shelve its more contentious programmes and seek a middle ground with its allies.

Hopefully, Vajpayee, "the right man in the wrong party", would adopt a just and non-discriminatory approach towards Indian minorities, especially the large Muslim community and remove the genuine apprehensions. We also hope he will hold on to his pledge: "India never was and never will be, a theocratic state". After all, India is not merely a parliamentary democracy, it is a republic of so many cultures and nationalities.

Needless to say, if hardliners think they can make life difficult for Muslims and other minorities, they are sadly mistaken. Nobody, to quote an Indian Muslim journalist, can put 120 million Muslims into gas chambers...

Iran: Sensitivity of Tajik Crisis Viewed

NC2805101196 Tehran ETTELA'AT in Persian 15 May 96 p 16

[Commentary by Mohammad Hoseyn Ja'farian: "Russia's Role in the Establishment of Peace in Tajikistan"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Even though some governments and mediatory forces have been involved in efforts for negotiations in Tajikistan for a long time, in order to seek ultimate solution for the differences between the opposition union and government forces, these multilateral efforts have not been able to reach bright conclusions.

The opposition forces were optimistic of resolving these differences in the course of the Ashgabat talks, but these hopes remained unrealized when the government used the pretext of the opposition forces' attack on government forces in the Seh Cheragh village and abducted the leader of the opposition union Haji Mozaffar — who was a representative in the cease-fire supervisory committee in Dushanbe. This served to further strain relations between the government and opposition forces.

Seyyed Abdullo Nuri [Islamic Movement leader] accused the government of interference, plotting, and the abduction of Haji Mozaffar, and as a mark of protest called his members of the Islamic Movement from the capital to Taleqan in northern Afghanistan.

Even after a few months there is no news of Haji Mozaffar's whereabouts, and despite the opposition's insistence on continuing negotiations, no tangible or renewed efforts to do so seem to have been made. Meanwhile news of sporadic clashes in the mountainous regions around Dushanbe and the towering peaks of Badakhshan province continue to be received. There have also been clashes on the Tajik-Afghan border, between the Russian border guards stationed in Tajikistan and the opposition forces.

Currently, Tajikistan is in the throes of a dangerous economic recession. This excruciating stagnation, which has had a destructive effect on the poor in society, has intensified the insecurity and political turmoil prevalent in the government. The prices of various consumer goods have spiraled and poverty and famine are lurking everywhere. Every day, news of killings and the murder of political, educational, and even cultural figures in the country are being disseminated to the world by the Dushanbe news agencies. These suspicious assassinations indicate an interorganizational purge and vengeance that is raising many doubts.

In any case, the threat of ethnic strife and the forging of regional fronts is mounting, and evidence of these dangerous moves can be witnessed in every corner of Tajikistan. The presence of a variety of cliques and a Mafia of splinter groups, engaged in illicit trade and dealing in narcotics, who are afflicted with corruption and debauchery is another problem. All this has aggravated the plethora of other ills and woes the country is grappling with. Hence, it is about time the warring sides make the maximum effort to attain a solution.

There is no doubt that Russia has a sensitive and key role to play in the Tajikistan problem. The opposition has realized this very well and is seeking to modify Russia's viewpoint regarding the opposition's stance. Accordingly, Abdullo Nuri, the leader of the union of opposition parties, asserted categorically in an interview with an Iranian newspaper some days ago that: "We are not ignoring Russian interests." In this interview, Nuri clarified that the Russians have no need to fear the Islamists, as they do not have any intention of severing Tajikistan's relations with Russia. They accept the obvious fact that this country has common links and historical dependence on Russia from the economic, political, military, and even cultural standpoints.

Such a clear stance at this sensitive juncture in Tajikistan's history can be very effective in mitigating Russia's apprehensions, regarding the opposition, in the quest for a final solution to the Tajikistan crisis. At present, Russia has very warm and friendly relations with most Islamic countries. The opposition members believe that in the event of Tajikistan becoming an Islamic country, it can continue to maintain the common denominators and uphold the distinctive interests that Russia has in Tajikistan.

They have stressed that their differences with the current Tajikistan Government should be viewed from the Russian vantage point as a demand for a popular Islamic government, which the present government is not. They insist that they will retain the current role that Russia has in Tajikistan, as well as its privileges.

In more precise terms, it appears that the opposition is not directly subverting the government, but merely accusing it of incompetence. They believe that in such circumstances and with these resources, they can steer Tajikistan toward security and prosperity while retaining its relations with Russia. They feel that the current government is lax in implementing law and preventing the pillage of the country's resources, and lacks the administrative and managerial ability to do so.

Under such circumstances, it is expected that in addition to efforts to end this imbroglio — the causes of which are so clear and remediable — Russia will refrain from blindly bolstering one side and continuing hostility toward the other, and will open a chapter of direct talks with the opposition. By listening to their views and remarks on how to resolve the Tajikistan stalemate, Russia can — with a greater awareness and knowledge — play a more vital and important role in eliminating the current differences. There is no doubt that one of the shortest paths to a solution and peace in Tajikistan is inherent in this important point.

All the experts on Tajikistan issues are unanimous that the problems of Afghanistan have a direct bearing on developments in Tajikistan. Currently, it appears that Afghanistan is moving swiftly and surely toward the attainment of peace, news of which we are hearing every day.

In view of favorable relations between Moscow and Kabul, the Russians can even enlist the assistance of the Afghans in order to attain their objectives. This is because peace in Central Asia is to the benefit of the entire region. Moscow, with its cordial ties with Tehran and in turn through Tehran's friendly ties with the Tajikistan Government as well as the opposition, can reap massive benefits from such a situation.

Iran: Foreign Ministry Calls Chechen Cease-Fire 'Positive' Step

LD3005185796 Tehran IRNA in English
1711 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 30, IRNA — Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmud Mohammadi on Thursday termed the Moscow accord for ceasefire in Chechnya and exchange of prisoners of war (POWs), as a "positive" step in the process of settling the crisis in the Caucasus republic.

Mohammadi said that as a "principled policy," the Islamic Republic of Iran had always underlined the necessity for restoring tranquility and stability in Chechnya within the framework of a peaceful settlement.

He expressed hope that the the belligerent parties would abide by the recently reached agreements and would continue with their talks to achieve a final peace in order to end the ongoing crisis.

He also hoped that the Russian Government would make efforts to remove the problems in Chechnya resulting from the 15-month old crisis, with regard to the devastation of the republic and sufferings and homelessness of its Muslim population.

Iran: Tehran Analyzes Impact of Afghanistan Peace Accord

NC3005084596 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian
0345 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Following the signing of a peace accord between the government of Borhanoddin Rabbani and Golboddin Hekmatyar, Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party] political efforts for the implementation of this accord in toto have assumed new dimensions.

According to the agreement, preliminary measures have been initiated for a joint military force to combat the warmongering groups. A group affiliated with Hekmatyar's forces in Kabul have deployed. Most important of all, steps have been taken to pave the way for Hekmatyar's entry into Kabul.

Reports indicate that due to the categorical decision by Rabbani and Hekmatyar to combat the warmongering groups, and to the fact that the opposition's predictions were in stark contrast with what actually transpired, the Taleban forces' hasty retreat, from the environs of Kabul, has entered a new phase.

Political observers think the Rabbani-Hekmatyar peace accord, which has put an end to four years of war between these two powerful groups, will provide a reliable matrix for solving the attritive Afghan crisis.

This is because most of them believe the politico-military coalition of the Kabul government and the Hezb-e Eslami will be a precursor to the induction of all other factions into the peace process, especially since most of the major Afghan groups welcomed the signing of the accord and described it as a powerful factor in the convergence of the peace-seeking groups.

Undoubtedly, this new perception is gaining strength in Afghan society and can herald a brighter future for the establishment of peace and security in this country. Afghanistan's experience of the past four years has proven that, in order to attain their illicit interests, foreigners are seeking only to fan the sedition of Afghanistan's civil strife and to prevent the warring groups from achieving understanding or agreement.

Now that the leaders of the country's most powerful political groups have reached an agreement with a view to establishing peace and tranquillity in Afghanistan, it is imperative that these groups act with political astuteness. They should enable this peace process against change and upheaval from the plots of foreign powers by adopting a political policy suitable for absorbing of all groups.

In any case, after years of violence and civil war, Afghanistan is now in a phase of construction and needs peace and unity. In fact, the recent fast-paced political developments in Afghanistan provide a golden opportunity to resolve their unfortunate situation without foreign interference.

Iran: Arab Nationals Said Receiving 'Assassination' Training

*NC3005152696 Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic
27 May 96 p 9*

[From the "Top Secret" column]

[FBIS Translated Text] A team of political assassination experts, affiliated with the Iranian Intelligence and Security Ministry and the National Security Council, is training Sudanese, Lebanese, Egyptian, and other Arab nationals on how to carry out assassinations and sniper attacks in streets and offices using the most modern technology. The training is taking place in Tehran's Karj [name as transliterated] suburb.

The Arab trainees were subjected to months of security tests, and the training camp enjoys full protection and strict security supervision.

Iran: Turkish Secularists 'More Isolated' After Ciller Departure

*LD3005163196 Tehran JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI
in Persian 26 May 96 p 16*

[Unattributed political commentary: "The Secularists Will Be Isolated"]

[FBIS Translated Text] With the exit of Tansu Ciller from the impermanent coalition, the life of the Government in Turkey is practically over. The Motherland Party [ANAP] and the True Path Party [DYP] can remain in power on the orders of Turkish President Suleyman Demirel only until further notice, when a decision has been made about a new government or a new election.

During its 11-week life, the Turkish coalition government has never been united and stable. Despite the fact that the two main parties, that is the ANAP, led by Ciller, and the DYP, led by Mesut Yilmaz, had joined forces against the Islamic Welfare [Refah] Party, the two parties never reached any accord on the running of the country.

The shaky coalition between the two parties was formed following last year's election, in which no party won an absolute majority, that is 276 out of 550 seats in the Turkish parliament, to form a government. However, the Welfare Party, with 158 seats, was ahead of all other parties. The DYP and the ANAP, with 134 and 126 seats respectively, came second and third. Thus a multiparty parliament was brought about in Turkey.

Following the elections, behind-the-scene secularists, including the Turkish military did their utmost to prevent the Welfare Party from forming the next government. It was because of those pressures that the Welfare Party was unsuccessful in forming a coalition government with its rival parties. As a result, despite strong political differences, the two secularist parties — the True Path Party and the Motherland Party — formed a coalition government, a government over which a shadow of rivalry, power struggle, and intense internal differences was cast from the very beginning.

As was expected, the life of the Turkish coalition government finally came to an end after 11 weeks because of these differences.

Without a doubt, there were two factors that further intensified the internal differences and the instability of the coalition government of Yilmaz and Ciller, thereby causing it to collapse: The emphasis by the Turkish constitutional court last month that the way in which Yilmaz obtained a vote of confidence was contrary to the charter of the parliament — this itself means the coalition government was illegal — and second, the pressure by the Islamic parties and groups on the government, especially after the signing of the shameful military agreement between secularists and the Zionist regime.

President Demirel has no option but to ask Necmettin Erbakan, leader of the Welfare Party, to form a coalition government or call mid-term elections to determine the fate of a future government.

In both cases, if behind-the-scene military men and Turkish senior officials have any respect for the votes cast by the people of that country, the secularists will be more isolated than before and the principal winners of last year's parliamentary elections will be able to play an important role in a future government.

Iran: Commentary Views Israeli Elections, 'Compromise Process'

LD2905192096 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1652 GMT 29 May 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] The political parties — Likud led by Netanyahu and Labor led by Shim'on Peres — clashed in a hard-fought election in occupied Palestine today.

Considering the stances of Likud and Labor, the supporters of compromise have tried to make out that the current election is fateful in advancing the compromise process. On that basis, they have expressed concern about the possibility of the defeat of Peres, calling it a factor in halting the compromise process.

Among Arab countries — although compromising elements, such as Jordan and 'Arafat, have adopted a stance in support of the Labor Party — independent Arab peoples and groups have been indifferent about the results of the election in occupied Palestine and have taken an impartial stance toward it. In the view of those groups, Likud and Labor have the same policy on Arabs — a policy that guarantees domination over Arab countries, usurping Arab lands, expansionism, and the continuation of the occupation of Palestine.

What is significant in the recent election in occupied Palestine is the disputes and clashes between the Zionist groups, disputes which resulted in the death of Yitzaq Rabin, former prime minister of the Zionist regime, and the holding of premature elections. Because of the intensity of the disputes, it seems that whichever Zionist group gains power will put forward excessive demands in the compromise process talks to reduce pressure from the opposition, resulting in nothing but slowing down the compromise process.

Iran: Muslims View Israeli Elections With 'Apathy'

LD3005211696 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1930 GMT 30 May 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Over 99 percent of votes in the elections of the Zionist regime have been counted and Netanyahu, leader of the Likud Party, has taken the lead over Shim'on Peres, current prime minister of the Zionist regime. With this, the champions and supporters of the plan for compromise, particularly the United States and others who had fastened their destiny to that of compromise with Israel, have become concerned and anxious.

These people fear that the premiership of Netanyahu will hinder the progress of compromise talks because he has extremist views about rapprochement with Arab countries.

The Muslims in the region, however, and particularly those in the occupied territories, are watching the elections and the results with apathy.

They believe that change in the pawns of the Zionist regime will not bring much change in a policy toward Muslims that is based on the aggressive nature of the regime.

The accuracy of this vision is proved in view of the fact that the leaders of the rival parties have been competing to implement programs of expansion and policies of suppression against Muslims.

Indeed, the use of terrorism, violence, murder, and torture against Muslims are generally acceptable acts among Zionists and a source of votes.

In view of the results of the Israeli elections, it seems that the regime will tend toward greater aggression and greed for concessions, and this will create fresh difficulties for the process in which the United States and the compromisers have laid their hopes.

Iran: IRNA Chief Details Role of Nonaligned News Pool

LD2805193896 Tehran IRNA in English 1531 GMT 28 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 28, (IRNA) — Addressing the 13th session of the culture and information ministers of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the managing director of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) and head of the NAM news agencies pool (NANAP), Fereydoun Vardinejad, in Abuja today indicated that in the world today, most of strategic and definitive decisions adopted are based on timely, precise, and conclusive news and information.

This may shed light on the very facts why the modern age has been appropriately named as the 'Information Age', said Vardinejad, adding that today, certain powers are trying to form a global information colony and that is why the developing countries should strive to break the monopoly of information in their bid to boost their development process.

"Moreover, we as the nonaligned states, are facing a much significant mission as to both adhere to the doctrine of nonalignment in its all-out aspects and still keep the wheel of development going on," he pointed out.

He expressed that the NAM could gain momentum in intensifying its objectives in compliance to the changes in the political and economic equations of the modern world, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the so-called East bloc, noting that the NANAP is also finding itself on a remotivated and more substantial basis to carry out its serious mission.

Vardinejad pointed out that following the successful convention of the 6th General Conference of NANAP in Tehran, 15-20 June 1992, accompanied by both a high qualitative and quantitative attendance of its members, IRNA, as the incoming chairman of the NANAP, adopted a three-year plan to carry out the Tehran plan of action during its term of office with the joint effort of the members.

He indicated that the first phase was mostly focused on planning and the projects for the installation of the communication facilities like computers, telex, and fax machines, coupled with some stationary equipment and selection of the staff to operate the machines and function at different levels as experts.

The second phase was for the execution of the plans and policies adopted at the Tehran general conference, he said, adding that the last part of the phase was mainly devoted to the arrangements of finalizing the venue of the next NANAP general conference.

The head of NANAP stressed that the prime goal in the NANAP programs during IRNA's chairmanship has been based on focusing attention to training and updating the professional knowledge of the member news agencies, indicating that the NANAP secretariat launched a two-week training course in 1993 for the senior male journalists of NANAP in Tehran under the title of "Development Journalism." He added that similar courses are to be initiated for the female journalists of NANAP in the near future.

Vardinejad underscored that the next priority of the NANAP chairman is planning on technical and editorial cooperation of the pool members in order to give the planning a more meaningful and logical expression.

The IRNA chief pointed out that research study showed that the present configuration of the pool communication network was not highly efficient, adding that there was a need to prepare an operational definition of the pool redistribution centers.

He noted that in order to achieve that end it was neccessary to acquire updated information on the potentials of the members, saying that a 20-item questionnaire has been prepared which is to be distributed among all members.

Vardinejad stressed that the most competent members will be indentified through this process for their superior technical and editorial capacities and will be selected for the project if they show their willingness to participate.

Iran: Commentator Views Topics Discussed at ECO Sessions

NC2805114496 Tehran ABRAR in Persian 16 May 96 p 12

[Commentary by M. Mollazehi: "On the Sidelines of the Ashgabat Session"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The fourth summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization [ECO] member countries in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, drew the attention of political and news circles at home and abroad for various reasons.

First, this session was convened after the inauguration of the Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan railroad, something that can be considered a historical event with a massive impact on the economic relations of Central Asia, the Middle East, East Asia, and Europe and something that will facilitate world trade.

Second, the event also generated controversy, examples of which can be found in the remarks of Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov and Turkish President Suleyman Demirel regarding issues propounded at the ECO summit. You can make two different deductions.

First, there is a view that the ECO should have only an economic bias and that political issues should not be allowed to creep in.

Second, there is a concept that economic issues and cooperation are ECO priorities but deliberations should not remain confined to these issues and the ECO should discuss and exchange views on issues pertaining to the region.

This is the impression conveyed in remarks by President Hashemi-Rafsanjani and President Suleyman Demirel; it is a more realistic view and in harmony with the general objectives for the establishment of the ECO.

There are different perceptions — in this unpleasant climate — as to why 10 ECO member countries should need effective cooperation in the political, economic, commercial, and security fields. The opposition of countries such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to political issues being propounded at the fourth ECO summit session in Ashgabat can be blamed on a lack of experience of the complicated world of politics.

You should remember that if political issues are raised at the ECO summit session it does not imply that any decisions or stances will be adopted; this is something most countries oppose. Instead such things can be discussed with the object of making a realistic appraisal of issues relating to economic and commercial cooperation. It cannot be denied that regional conflicts or political instability have hindered some of the member countries from effective cooperation in the ECO.

Security and political stability are the necessary prerequisites for economic and commercial development. How can we expect the ECO to attain its predetermined objectives in conditions of continuing regional conflicts?

The predominant, economic, political, and military powers are displeased that the ECO has attained such a position without their presence. They think a strategic political region should be prevented from becoming too strong through interregional cooperation.

The extraordinary attention by the powerful European and American media to the unimportant and marginal remarks by Karimov is surely a calculated plan to detract from the importance of the inauguration of the Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan railroad. Through the ECO this project will give Central Asia access to free international waters, Southwest Asia, and the PRC in addition to providing commercial benefits to the West. Some say that even Moscow circles do not know the massive scope of the connection this project will give the Central Asian countries.

Political issues must be discussed in conjunction with economic and commercial interests at a summit. But until all the ECO members concur in this regard there must be caution. The ECO is still relatively new and the framework of the 10 regional countries that it covers is strong enough motivation for the Western world, especially for the United States and the Zionist regime, to embroil it in peripheral issues to undermine its efficiency.

There are hopes that eventually the requisite experience will be gained and conditions will be more favorable for incorporating political issues. The effective and strong presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the ECO will make it inevitable that a variety of issues are raised at ECO summit sessions. It seems unlikely that any country would be inclined to remain isolated in the region, as was implied by the remarks of the president of Uzbekistan.

Iran: OAU Envoys in Tehran Celebrate Organization's Anniversary

LD2505194296 Tehran IRNA in English 1908 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 25, IRNA — Foreign ambassadors and Iranian officials at the Nigerian embassy here Saturday marked the 33rd anniversary of the formation of the Organization for African Unity (OAU).

Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati in his address to diplomats at the embassy appreciated the role played by OAU during the Cold War era and said that in the present day world the organization was expected to carry out even more important tasks than before.

He said since the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, Iran had established friendly relations with OAU and had asked for an observer status in the organization.

Velayati said Iran had established political relations with 23 African countries at the level of resident ambassadors and with many other countries at the level of accredited ambassador.

He said that Iran believed the African continent would play a more important role in the process of international developments of the world's politics in coming century which, he said, required the unity, and firm determination of African and their nations' self-confidence.

In response, current chairman of the OAU Meles Zenawi who is also Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, offered a brief survey of the progress of OAU in various areas of concern to African nations including its successful struggle against colonialism and apartheid.

He said OAU had now entered into a new phase whereby it had turned its attention to face the new challenges of economic and social developments in Africa. He said today many African countries faced acute economic problems because of the certain structural shortcomings in their economic development policies and also due to the continuation of the unforeseeable international economic situation. The magnitude, he said, of Africa's external indebtedness which had risen dramatically during the last few years and the heavy debt service burden has been other contributing factor to Africa's economic and social affairs.

He said, nonetheless, that he felt absolutely confident that African countries were committed, more than ever before, to break the cycle of poverty and undevelopment that had caused immense hardship to their peoples.

"But the magnitude of the problem," he said, "and the challenges facing our respective countries no doubt requires the cooperation and assitance or our global partners... We extend our call to the community of nations to appreciate and assist us in our endeavors. [no closing quotation marks as received]

He said the OAU also considered it its responsibility to strengthen democracy and good governance throughout the African continent which, he said, it hoped to fulfill relying also on the support of the international community in concrete terms with full realization that the democratic changes in Africa were bound to be complex and required a great deal of patience and determination.

Iran: Official Updates Majles Election Results

LD2505175896 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1630 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Mr. ['Ali Reza] Tabesh, deputy interior minister for political and social affairs, has said in an interview with the correspondent of the Central News Unit: The Guardian Council has so far declared its view regarding the fifth term elections in 186 constituencies, from a total of 196. From the 186 constituencies, the correctness of the elections in 175 constituencies, with a total of 241 deputies, have been endorsed and the elections in 11 constituencies, with a total of 18 deputies, have been declared invalid.

Regarding the date when mid-term elections will be held in the constituencies in which the elections have been annulled, Tabesh said: The mid-term elections in these constituencies will be held five months after the end of this round of the elections. [passage omitted]

Iran: Council Rejects Election Results of 3 Constituencies

LD2905122996 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0930 GMT 29 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Guardian Council has examined the results of the second round of the fifth term Majles elections for the constituency of Selseleh and Delfan. It endorsed the validity of the elections in this constituency.

At the meeting the results of the second round of the fifth term Majles elections for the constituencies of Salmas, Natanz, and Ramhormoz were also examined. The validity of the elections in these constituencies was not endorsed.

Iran: Daily Urges Parliamentarians To Keep Election Promises

LD3005091596 Tehran IRNA in English 0707 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 30, IRNA — The English daily 'TEHRAN TIMES' Thursday commented on the convening of the fifth Majles on Saturday urging the deputies to keep their election promises.

During the election campaigns three major trends appeared to be the main contenders in the political landscape of Iran, they are Jame-e Rowhaniyat-e Mobarez (JRM), Kargozaran-e Sazandegi and the leftists, the editorial said, reminding the deputies entered the Majles on the basis of a few election slogans.

The nation expects the two main groups in the forthcoming Majles, JRM and Kargozaran, to avoid ambiguity and clarify their plans for achieving the goals of social justice and socio-economic development, it said.

Reminding that none of the contenders is a well-knitted organized political party, the paper also called on the two groups to form political parties to increase the accountability of their group.

Turning to JRM's election slogan of supporting President Hashemi- Rafsanjani, the editorial said "the MPs of the fifth Majles should not forget that any attempt to weaken President Rafsanjani is a betrayal of the voters and an instance of disobedience to the leader."

The fourth term of the 270-seat Majles ended on May 26.

Iran: 'Text' of Tehran Mayor's Letter to Nateq-Nuri

LD2905175196 Tehran JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI in Persian 23 May 96 p 2

[Unattributed report: "The Letter of the Mayor of Tehran to Mr. Nateq-Nuri Regarding Attending the Majles To Reply to the Inquiry Report"]

[FBIS Translated Text] News service — Tehran Mayor Gholam Hoseyn Karbaschi has sent a letter to Hojjat ol-Eslam val-Moslemin 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, speaker of the Islamic Majles, and asked if he could come to the Majles in person and reply to the allegations stated in a report by the Majles Inquiry and Investigative Committee about the performance of Tehran municipality.

The full text of letter has been put at the disposal of the daily JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI and is as follows: "In the name of God, His Excellency Hojjat ol-Eslam val-Moslemin Nateq-Nuri, speaker of the Islamic Majles. Greetings and respects. Following my earlier letter — to which, unfortunately, no reply, not even a negative one, was received — and in view of a report under the title of inquiry and investigation of the performance of Tehran municipality, which was read out today from the forum of the Majles, once again I refer to the clear and firm comments made by His Eminence Ayatollah Khomeyni, the late great leader of the Islamic revolution, .

"He said: If a person who is not present in the Majles or cannot come to the Majles to defend himself is attacked in the Majles, he must either be allowed to defend himself in the Majles, or if this will create any legal problems, then it is the grave duty of the radio, television, and press to see that the right of no underprivileged person is trampled, no-one's personality is crushed. The Majles deputies and the speaker, themselves, are the people who must allow this process to take place. With their commitment and responsibility, they must give this right to a person who is absent from the Majles so that his right can be protected by the Majles, which is the protector of the high interests of the country and the nation. No-one should be victimized.

"If any allegation is made against the government officials or others, they have the right to complain to the judicial branch in order to be investigated. (From the message of Imam [Khomeyni] to the second Majles, page 11, Elections and the Majles in the Imam's Words and Messages.)

"In view of the fact that firm and dignified answers were provided to almost all cases that are mentioned in the inquiry and investigation report, and were presented to the commission, no reference was made to the answers in the report, and the accusations that were made are not true in any of the cases.

"In order to defend those hard workers — who in the past five to six years, with extreme devotion and perseverance, have worked to transform a city as bad as Tehran into today's Tehran, which is going to deserve the title of the mother of the Islamic city even for its appearance — I once again request from you to allow me to have the opportunity to give necessary replies to the people's deputies at the fourth Majles elections before this term of the Majles ends.

"It should be added that contrary to what has been said in the report, neither I nor any informed persons were ever invited to answer the cases mentioned in the report by the internal commission or the inquiry group. The letters and documents bear testimony to this claim. With thanks.

"[Signed] Tehran Mayor Gholam Hoseyn Karbaschi."

Iran: Tehran's Hezbollah Calls For Prosecution of Majles Deputy

LD2805215996 Tehran JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI in Persian 25 May 96 p 3

[Unattributed report: "Tehran's Hezbollah Rejects Mr. Gharibani's Allegations"]

[FBIS Translated Text] News service: Tehran's Hezbollah has issued a statement in which it rejected the allegations by Mr Gharibani, Ardebil deputy to the fourth Majles, and called for his prosecution through judicial channels.

The statement issued by Tehran's Hezbollah says: Following the insulting comments by the liberal deputy of Ardebil during his pre-agenda speech from the holy forum of the Islamic Majles regarding allegations made against Hezbollah — and while expressing appreciation for the firm reply given by the Hezbollahi deputies in the Majles — and by reserving the right for Hezbollah to pursue legally and through judicial channels his insulting comments, it [Tehran's Hezbollah] mentions the following points:

1. Tehran's Hezbollah expresses its hatred and aversion to him and to all those who are tuned in towards the West, and thanks the Guardian Council for rejecting their competency to become candidates for the fifth Majles elections, as well as the competency of the elements affiliated to the deviant elements.

It hopes that the [fifth] Islamic Majles will also take action in rejecting the validity of the credentials of a number of these elements who have unfortunately managed to come to the Majles.

2. We request from the judicial branch an investigation of the above issue. If need be, Tehran's Hezbollah is ready to name an authoritative representative to pursue the case legally.

Iran: Academic Sends Letter to Majles Speaker on Downing of Plane

LD3005223496 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 26 May 96 p 3

["News report": "Letter to Majles Speaker on Airbus Downing"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran — Dr. Mahmood Kashani, professor of law at the Shahid (Martyr) Beheshti University, has forwarded a letter to Majles (Parliament) Speaker Akbar Nateq-Nuri. Excerpts follow:

According to the ETTELA'AT daily, published Saturday Esfand 5, 1374 [24 February 1996], the official in charge of Iran's international Legal Services Bureau declared, "The U.S. finally submitted to Iran's demand on the downing of an Airbus." As you are aware, an IRAN AIR Airbus, departing from Bandar Abbas airport, was downed by two missiles fired by the American Vincennes on 3 July 1988. All 290 people on board, including passengers and crew, lost their lives.

Immediately after the downing of the passenger plane, the government of Iran filed a petition with the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) demanding the following: 1) condemning the attack and downing of Flight 655 by American military troops stationed in the Persian Gulf. 2) explicitly declaring that an international crime has been committed through violation of international law and legal commitments by the U.S. Administration which is itself a member of the ICAO. 3) identifying and explicitly declaring the responsibilities of the U.S. Administration and demanding moral and material compensation 4) demanding an immediate end to the existing barriers, limitations, and threats and putting an end to the use of military muscle against domestic flights in the region. The ICAO should call on all relevant organizations to demand the withdrawal of foreign military troops from the Persian Gulf region.

Based on the agreements reached in the 25th General Assembly of the ICAO, Iran's demands have been rightful but for unspecified reasons, the ICAO Council on 17 March 1989 just sufficed with merely voicing sympathy and presenting a series of general considerations unrelated to the legitimate demands made by Iran.

Objecting to this decision, Iran filed a petition on 17 May 1989 with The Hague which was to see to the matter on 12 September 1994. A month ahead of this date, Iran and the U.S. agreed to postpone it. Certain agreements were reached after negotiations and, on 22 February 1996, a final settlement was reached. Dr. Eftekhar Jahromi who is in charge of the International legal Services Bureau stated the following in a press conference:

As the U.S. Administration felt it lacked sound political and legal standing before the demands made by the Iranian Government, it submitted a while before the court session and expressed readiness to pay the reparations.

Right now, questions have been raised for which clear answers cannot be found in Dr. Eftekhar Jahromi's brief statements. Some of these questions follow:

First, when the U.S. raised a ballyhoo on Iran's involvement in the explosion of the Jewish cultural centre in Buenos Aires, why did the Bureau demand a halt to consideration of this petition by the Hague, instead of seriously pursuing the petition on the U.S. unjustifiable action in downing a passenger plane?

Second, in this settlement, has the U.S. accepted that it has breached international laws and Chicago and Montreal conventions to which Iran and the U.S. acceded years back and which were the subjects of paragraphs one and two of Iran's petition?

If Dr. Eftekhar Jahromi's claim is true and the U.S. Administration has accepted this part of the petition, why haven't the mass media and high-ranking officials referred to this success to make the Iranian people happy over gaining this legitimate and just right? And if this is not he case, how and why does an Iranian Government official feel rightful to deceive the people by mentioning such false words to the domestic and foreign media?

The Majles (Parliament) should study the text of this settlement to survey the reasons for this dualism in the statements of Iranian and American officials and to shed light on the reality.

Third, if through the settlement, Iran's petition has been retrieved from The Hague, which body should see to the U.S. Administration's flagrant violation of international conventions. If the official in charge of the Bureau has withdrawn Iran's petition, this means that the Iranian Government is satisfied with the oppressive 17 March decision taken by the ICAO Council and has considered this undue interpretation sufficient to justify the U.S. downing of a plane which led to the loss of lives of 290 passengers, a move that was in contravention of international law. This is while Admiral Craw, a high-ranking U.S. Armed Forces official, in 1992 openly admitted that the downing took place in Iran's territorial waters and called the Vincennes attack on a passenger plane unjustifiable.

Fourth, paragraph three demands that the U.S. Administration demand reparations to the Iranian Government to compensate for the moral and material losses of the mourning families and IRAN AIR. Based on Article 139 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, "The settlement of claims relating to public and state property, or the referral thereof to arbitration, is in every case dependent on the approval of the Council of Ministers, and the Majles must be informed of these matters. In cases where one party to the dispute is a foreigner, as well as in important cases that are purely domestic, the approval of the Majles must also be obtained."

How has the Bureau dared to sign this settlement without the approval of the Majles?

Fifth, in this settlement, the U.S. Administration has rejected legitimate demands of Iran which was the major party to this arbitration and has abstained from assuming responsibility vis-a-vis the Iranian Government. Iran demanded that The Hague condemn the U.S. Administration to pay reparations for acting in contravention of the international laws.

Sixth, the U.S. not trusting the Iranian Government, believes that the reparations should be directly paid to the Iranian families. According to the Voice of America (VOA) and the U.S. State Department spokesman, around $62 million will be deposited in Switzerland's Union Bank with the joint account of New York's Federal Reserve and the Central Bank of Iran (CBI). Reparations will be paid to the Iranian families on the joint order of the Embassy of Switzerland in Tehran which preserves U.S. interests and the Bureau. This approach does not mean that the U.S. Administration has given in to Iran's demands or even stances.

Seventh, previously, when settlements were made in regard to claims made by American citizens the Iranian Government placed the agreed sums at the disposal of the U.S. Administration to divide it among the said citizens in whatever way it deemed expedient.

In conclusion, one should bear in mind that this petition pertains to moral and material losses inflicted on the Iranian Government and the bereaved families. In addition, the country's dignity, important political concerns, and defence of sovereignty are at point in Iran.

The people of Iran rightfully demand reparation for intense damages inflicted through a military attack on a passenger plane which has tarnished the country's dignity on the global scene.

In your pre-agenda speech in the Majles on 2 April 1996 (following New Year holidays) you said that during the holidays Iran's foreign policy faced an event and referred to the German Justice Administration's decree against a high-ranking Iranian official. The Majles was expected to zoom in on this sensitive settlement which was declared during the Majles holidays and about which decisions should have solely been taken by the Parliament in accordance with Article 139 of the Constitution. This issue should have been high on the agenda of the Majles.

Iran: Nateq-Nuri Addresses Majles on War Games, Economic Issues

*LD2505172296 Tehran IRNA in English
1429 GMT 25 May 96*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 25, IRNA — Majles Speaker Hojjat ol-Eslam 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri here on Saturday felicitated Iranian army personnel for successfully conducting Velayat military exercises on Thursday [23 May] and Friday.

Speaking at the open session of Majles, Nateq-Nuri said the two-day military exercises showed the preparedness of the Islamic Republic Armed Forces to defend the Islamic territory.

The Majles speaker made it clear that the armed forces would never allow those dreaming of attacking Iran.

He said the military exercises were one of unprecedented maneuvers in the history of the Islamic revolution. He added that Velayat maneuver conducted by 200,000 troops is indicative of the high managerial power of army commanders and of the army's coordination and preparedness to defend the country.

He pointed to the attendance of the leader of the Islamic revolution Ayatollah Seyyed 'Ali Khamene'i and said the leader's presence at the scene of the military exercise helped create a spiritual sense to the operation.

in the open session of Majles presided over by Hojjat ol-Eslam 'Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, the commissions of the finance and economic affairs and cooperatives offered the report on an inquiry into the performance of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

The report included the CBI's operation on foreign exchange, personnel issue and the affairs of the the inspectorate body at the CBI.

In the meantime, the Majles commission in charge of the revolution's institutions also offered the rest of its report on the probe into the activities and performance of Mostazafan and Janbazan foundation.

The last session of the outgoing fourth Majles will be held tomorrow, on Sunday.

270 members of parliament will hold a valedictory ceremony for the termination of the fourth Majles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and their four-year term in office as legislators of the country.

The fifth Majles will formally assume responsibility as legislative on May 27. However, the inaugural ceremonies will be held on June 1.

Iran: Commander Comments on Success of Military Exercise

LD2905121496 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 0930 GMT 29 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The commander of the ground forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army has described the distinguishing features of the massive military exercise, code-named Velayat, which was held recently [23 May] in Kushk-e-Nosrat region, near Qom.

Brigadier General Ahmad Dadbin said the most important feature of the Velayat exercise was the speed with which the forces and equipment were transferred and deployed.

He said: Around 10 divisions were stationed in the exercise region in less than 14 days and heavy tanks, personal carriers, and other equipment were transferred to the region in a short period of time.

The commander of the ground forces said other distinguishing features of the military exercise were: The existence of coordination of fire from the participating units including supporting fire from the swift flyers of the Air Force, helicopters of the airborne forces, tanks, artillery, and from all the weapons used by the infantry units; special logistic provisions; and testing of newly produced weapons by the ground forces.

Brig. Gen. Dadbin referred to the rapid action by the airborne unit in Velayat exercise and said: The unit entered the operation from Shiraz and fulfilled its operations as a rapid reaction unit with full success by participating in the region designated for the Velayat exercise in less than two hours.

Brig. Gen. Dadbin pointed out that the strength and combat capability of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran was reflected in the world's mass media after the implementation of the massive Velayat exercise, and added: The love of the warriors for Islam to the great leader of the revolution [Khamene'i] and commander in chief of the forces and their fighting spirit has caused concern to the global arrogance.

He stated that the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran was a defensive army and does not intend to attack any country, however, it was ready to enter into action at anytime and in any place under the command of the great leader of the revolution and commander in chief of the forces.

Iran: Commentary Stresses Importance of Armed Forces

LD3005164796 Tehran KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL in English 26 May 96 p 2

[Commentary by Yousef Gh. Gharavi: "Crucial Role of Armed Forces"; from the "Viewpoint" column]

[FBIS Translated Text] Obviously, the large-scale maneuvers of the ground forces of the Islamic Republic army titled "Velayat," has left far-reaching effects on both regional as well as international circles.

Basically, the function of the armed forces, within the structure of civilized societies, is defined in terms of its role in defending the independence, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty.

As a matter of fact, in the Islamic rule of Iran, these sacred missions are coupled with devotion, and dedication in order to preserve the Islamic system and its countless achievements during the last 17 years.

Needless to say, the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran has assumed a great deal of responsibility in the post-reconstruction era, besides keeping its combat-readiness intact in order to defuse the conspiracies hatched by the enemies.

It may be recalled that when Iran had fallen victim to Saddam Husayn's political ambitions in 1982, no reaction was observed in the region and Iran was isolated in its struggle to drive out the Iraqi forces from the occupied territories. Similarly, when the Ba'thist forces, invaded Kuwait in 1990, peace and tranquillity of the entire region was crippled and the alien forces were asked to restore the former status quo.

In fact, the idea of establishing a national army in order to serve as a strong instrument to maintain and guard political sovereignty and keep national independence intact, does not fully exist in the present political establishment of our neighboring countries. These armies, unfortunately, are employed to suppress the upheaval of domestic opposition movements who are seeking either to have a say in the political setup or enjoy a set of basic rights within the already recognized and ratified laws.

As such, it seems that the Zionist-controlled media, are making every effort to furnish a hostile perspective of the military exercise of the Islamic Armed Forces and, of course, the actual motives behind this vicious propaganda is well-known given the deep-seated and lasting hostility of the Zionists toward this Islamic nation.

Referring to the new role assumed by the armed forces, the leader of the Islamic revolution has stressed that Iran's Armed Forces in the post-war period demonstrated the supremacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of reconstruction.

This role, should be strengthened further and consolidated so that the forces could emerge as a strong arm in the massive reconstruction period along with other civil and military forces. The armed forces, no doubt, are the backbone of the current age of reconstruction of Islamic Iran, and are an inseparable part of it.

Iran: Exercise Said Maneuvers for 'Self-Defense,' Not Aggression

NC3105130696 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 25 May 96 p 2

[Editorial: "The Largest Military Maneuver — Preparedness for Self-Defense"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Held in an area of 5,400 square kilometers, 80 kilometers south of Tehran, the largest military maneuver in the Middle East began on May 23 and ended yesterday.

This maneuver had one objective: To show the nation and the world that Iran is militarily prepared. The message to both friend and enemy alike is that Iran is capable of averting any threat; capable of defending every inch of its territory; capable of maintaining peace in the region; it can be a reliable defense partner for regional countries; it need not rely on foreigners for its self-defense, but on itself.

Experience has taught us that too much trust in other nations is not necessarily healthy. One morning you wake up and your neighboring ruler wants half of your territory. Experience has also taught us that making an agreement with another nation — usually a superpower far away — to serve the nation's interest in time of war is not always in the best interest of the country.

For example, the superpower might say, "I'll defend you provided you be my servant in time of peace." (Witness the former Shah.) Or, the country is attacked, and the superpower shrugs: "That's your problem. I didn't sign that agreement. My predecessor did." International agreements and fancy signatures are not always reliable.

These are some of the reasons a nation cannot depend on other nations for defense. Any belief that no one will attack us is an illusion; and any belief that someone will help us in time of dire emergency is at best usually false, unless the helper has a vested interest in our country. Also, that kind of help, if and when it arrives too late.

Military preparedness, however, does not mean preparedness for offensive purposes. Iran does not believe in attacking a neighboring country and taking its territory. A military maneuver is to show that, if attacked, we are fully prepared to defend ourselves.

Iran: Commentary Backs Primakov Statements on Nuclear Cooperation

LD3005184396 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 30 May 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov on Wednesday 29 May, in an interview with the newspaper CORRIERE DELLA SERA in Rome, elaborated the cooperation of Russia with Iran in the field of nuclear energy. The Russian foreign minister said that the devices sold to Iran are only used for civil and peaceful purposes. He reiterated that America sells similar devices to North Korea compared to the Russian equipment sold to Iran.

The U.S. Government has started a propaganda campaign to halt the Russian Government from cooperating with Iran in the field of nuclear energy. The Iranian officials have reiterated in the past that they do not intend to produce nuclear arms, and the purpose behind opening the Bushehr nuclear installation has been the production of electricity.

The fact is that the current energy sources are mortal and world countries need to substitute new sources to provide energy. The Bushehr nuclear installations construction, which began by two German companies in 1974 and were left unfinished five years later, was resumed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. On this basis, Iran made a contract with Russia, equivalent to $800 million in 1995. Although the Bushehr nuclear installation project is implemented on the framework of international laws and under the control of the Atomic Energy International Agency, the U.S. officials are still trying to stop Russia from implementing the contract. The American Government's pressures to halt the nuclear energy cooperation between Iran and Russia coincides with the immense support of America for the Zionist regime, turning it to a nuclear power in the Middle East and threatening the security of the region. However, the U.S. pressures on Russia have had no result and the Russian officials, following an independent policy, have rejected the American policy.

The Russian foreign minister, in his recent interview in Rome, reiterated on the consolidated and independent policy of Moscow against the U.S. pressures; adding that Moscow does not want to act as a country defeated in the Cold War and the West should not expect obedience from the Russian Government.

Iran: Lebanese Scholar — Hostility Could Be Confronted by Progress

LD2905094096 Tehran IRNA in English 0750 GMT 29 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 29, IRNA — Only some officials of other countries maintain a hostile stance against Iran, a Lebanese scholar and writer opined, adding that this present atmosphere is temporary and is best confronted by a position of strength through Iran's social, economic, industrial and cultural progress.

George Jordaq, who came here on the invitation of the Center of Research and Composition of Humanities Textbooks of Universities, told the English daily TEHRAN TIMES in an interview printed Wednesday, "if the world community sees progress in all fields in Iran, the plots of (hostile governments) will be futile and their people will not join in their governments' ill will."

Turning to his book of five volumes titled "Imam 'Ali: The Voice of Justice and Humanity", he said that the present world is far from what Imam 'Ali intended it to be from his teachings.

The paper quoted him as stressing that it is the duty of scholars "to impart their teachings to the new generation, using everyday language and contemporary culture, towards achieving a more humane and just society," adding that Iran's rich resources gives it an advantage in realizing this goal.

Commenting on his stay in the country, he said he found the superiority of thinking in the Islamic Republic as being unique in the contemporary world, predicting that the sense of maturity and diligence of Iranians will assure a high level of development for the country.

Jordaq, a Christian by faith, visited western Azerbaijan, Isfahan and several Caspian provinces. He also went to Qom on Monday, exchanging views with religious scholars and visiting scientific centers.

Iran: Emami-Kashani's Friday Prayers Sermon

LD2405120096 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran Provincial Network in Persian
0745 GMT 24 May 96

[Second Friday prayers sermon given by Ayatollah Emami-Kashani, senior member of the Guardian Council, in Tehran — live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. [passage omitted] Today, the archenemies of Islam are the usurper Israel and the Zionists. The eminent leader of the revolution [Khamene'i] repeatedly warned us against this enemy. He has done this because he is continuing the path of our lost Imam [Khomeyni] who taught us many lessons and constantly warned the nation against the dangers posed by the great satan and global arrogance, in particular the usurper Israel. The eminent leader of the revolution also spoke of this danger in his address to the participants in the magnificent Velayat exercises.

By staging these highly constructive and unity-inspiring exercises, our armed forces want to tell the world that the Islamic Republic is alive. They want to tell the world that the armed forces of the Islamic Republic, from Basij and guards right through to the army troops, are all part of the same pillar. They want to say that they will all stand firm and resolute with their fists clenched to repel the onslaught of the Zionist enemy. [congregation chants: "God is great."]

This is a reality inspired by the 'Ashura [10th day of mourning month of Muharram and the martyrdom anniversary of the third Shi'i Imam Husayn].

The liberation of Khorramshahr by the capable officers, soldiers, and in general all the devotees of the Islamic Republic spelled doom for all the plans and predictions of the arrogant world. [passage omitted]

The current military exercises do not pose a threat to any country. Instead, what we are doing is just an exercise in defense against the long-standing enemy of Islam, that is to say, the usurper Zionists, who were opposed to the holy prophet right from the very beginning. We hope that the unconditional support that the United States and its White House are ignorant enough to give to Israel — support that is bringing shame to the American nation — may eventually lead to the downfall of the White House itself, God willing.

It is a fact that the type of support that Washington is giving to Israel is seriously damaging the United States' reputation in the world. I really do not know why the American nation does not object to all of this and does not raise a cry of protest. They should ask their government: Why are you undermining our honor and integrity to such an extent? It is a misfortune for a nation to be ruled by such a bad government, which chooses to lend such unconditional support to the cancerous cell of Zionism and is even ready to use nuclear weapons to defend it.

Today we are showing our respect for 800 martyrs [newly discovered bodies of 800 killed during the Iran-Iraq war, to be buried after Friday prayers]. We are showing our respect because these dear ones were trained in Imam Husayn's school. They reached the point of glory, when they were granted the exalted status of martyrdom. If you trace the blood of these 800 martyrs, whose caskets you will carry during the funeral ceremony, you will find out that their blood is linked, drop by drop, to the same pool of blood shed by Imam Husayn and his companions. We offer our condolences to the esteemed families of these martyrs.

What lesson should we learn from these martyrs? O nation of Islam in the Arabic and non-Arabic countries, Ashura belongs to us all. The noble prophet of Islam, may God's peace and salutations be upon him and his scion, instructed all of us to follow Husayn's doctrine. Let us all, Shiite, Sunni, and others, join hands and revive Husayn's ideas in prayer centers and mosques. His doctrine is not properly followed even by the Shiite sect. It is weak.

Praise God for sending the thought to the illustrious leader of the revolution [Khamene'i], may God prolong his life, to instruct the mourners not to harm themselves with knives [by self-flagellation in mourning]. Imam Husayn's uprising can win over the entire world and can make all mankind love him. However, self-flagellation by knives will defeat the objective. [passage omitted]

I address the non-Shiites, that is, the Sunni brothers. To us all of the religion of Islam is the issue. The key issue to us is Islam's rights and Islamic honor. Is it just that criminal Israel has dominated the people of Palestine and forced them to flee their homes? [congregation chants: "Death to Israel"]

Is this the meaning of Islam?

The holy Koran repeated instructions on jihad, on the struggle against blasphemy, and on our obligation to safeguard the religion. But how far do we obey these instructions in our life? Let us all implement the doctrine of Imam Husayn in all Islamic countries. If we all clamor...[Emami-Kashani pauses] As the imam [Khomeyni], may God sanctify his soul, said: If every Muslim pours a bucket of water over Israel, the flood will wash away and destroy Israel. This silence is suppression, it is fear, it is cowardice, and it stems from [our] love for mundane matters. Preserve your human integrity. Let us preserve human dignity by practising Islam's instructions. See how Imam Husayn responded to God's call. See how he pursued spirituality. Let us implement spirituality and piety in our homes, in our administrative offices, in our bazaars, and other aspects of our daily life. Just a gesture of devotion in our administrative offices, transactions, and other aspects of daily life would make our life much better. [passage omitted]

Iran: IRGC Commander Addresses Meeting of Basijis

LD2805230796 Tehran IRAN in Persian 23 May 96 p 2

[Unattributed report: "Major General Mohsen Reza'i at a gathering of basijis from ministries and government departments: Basijis will not abandon the eminent leader of the revolution and the dear president"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Political desk — At a large meeting of the basij [paramilitary volunteers] from government ministries and offices, the commander in chief of the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps [IRGC] said: The decency shown by the basijis is not a sign of weakness and they would definitely not abandon the eminent leader of the revolution and the dear president.

He added: No one should dare to insult or show insensibility towards the basijis, because it is they who stood and continue to stand bravely against the arrogance and the enemy.

According to the IRAN correspondent, Commander Major General Mohsen Reza'i told the 4,000-strong basij gathering, which was held at the Eram Park meeting hall, that the basij was the pillar of the revolution, that the revolution must move with them and that they must be on the scene.

Major General Reza'i told the basijis: In the era of construction today, the basij must guard the [Shi'i] banner of Ashura, must support the government's Hezbollah forces, and must fearlessly and wisely defend the Islamic values.

Before the the IRGC commander in chief commented, Mohsen Rafiqdust, head of the Foundation for Oppressed, said in his speech: The basijis must guide the members of society through their own behavior and by a language of reason. They must put on their agenda timely participation in the daily prayers in government ministries and offices as well as a vigilant presence in society.

On the fringe:

While Mohsen Rafiqdust was speaking, the commander in chief of the IRGC arrived at the meeting prompting chanting by the basijis. Despite efforts by the organizers and Mohsen Rafiqdust, the chanting continued and the speech by the head of the Foundation for the Oppressed was left unfinished and he left the hall after several moments.

The basijis were chanting slogans such as "God is great," "Death to those opposed to the Guardianship of the Jurisconsult," "Death to liberals" and "Basij will never accept a compromise."

Before the address by Mohsen Reza'i, a narration was recited in praise of the basijis and their innocence, which prompted weeping among the audience.

At the end of the meeting, pamphlets titled "A critique of liberalism" were distributed among the participants.

At the meeting, Major General Mohsen Reza'i presented plaques in praise of selflessness and steadfastness to a number of commanders.

Iran: Protection of Islamic Revolution Values Urged

*LD2805213796 Tehran HAMSHAHRI in Persian
25 May 96 p 1*

[Report from political desk: "Secretary General of the Society for the Defense of the Values of the Islamic Revolution: Undermining the Government Is Unacceptable and Harms the Prestige of the Islamic Republic"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Political service: The Majles deputies are answerable to God and for fulfilling their Majles duties.

Announcing the above at a meeting with a number of the deputies of the fifth Majles, Hojjat ol-Eslam val-Moslemin Mohammadi Reyshahri, secretary general of the Society for the Defense of the Values of the Islamic Revolution, said: If someone does something to undermine the government, the action is against the values [of the Islamic revolution]. We must not resort to such an action to harm the valuable character and dignity of Mr. Hashemi-Rafsanjani, because protecting his reputation means respecting the prestige of the Islamic Republic.

He emphasized the need for unity of views among the deputies and the government officials, and said: The atmosphere of the Majles must be imbued with the perfume of spirituality.

Iran: Students To Be Expelled for Protesting Against Sorush

*LD2805201196 Tehran KEYHAN in Persian
21 May 96 p 2*

[Unattributed article: "Four War-Disabled Students at Tehran University Social Studies Faculty are on the Verge of Being Expelled"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Four war-disabled [janbaz] students of the social studies faculty of Tehran University are about to be expelled, because they took part in a gathering in protest of Dr. Sorush's series of lectures at that faculty.

According to our reporter, these students, whose disabilities are 50 percent or more, came to the offices of KAYHAN and said that a gathering of war-disabled and basiji students together with other students committed to the supreme leader [velayat-e faqih], from different university faculties, took place recently on the campus of the social studies faculty. This gathering was in protest against the continuation of Dr. Sorush's course. Unfortunately, since a dangerous current of liberalism is in the process of overrunning that college, following this protest, the dean and deputy in charge of the financial and administrative affairs of the faculty have, in a letter, told four of the war-disabled students who took part in the protest to present themselves as soon as possible to the head of the preliminary student disciplinary committee. The letter warns that if these students fail to do this, decisions will be made about their case in absentia.

While criticizing the way the deputy for administrative and financial affairs handled the matter, these students, at the same time felt that because some of the officials in charge of the college did not believe in taking action against cultural onslaught, this had paved the way for the spread of the evil notion of the separation of religion from politics.

The war-disabled students called on the office of the representative of the supreme leader at Tehran University and on the country's cultural officials to attend immediately to students' problems and take steps to preserve the reputation of the university as a sacred place for the contrasts of opinion: the preservation and safeguarding of the aspirations and values of eight years of holy defense, and the preservation of the blood of martyrs. The students then declared: We will never allow these kinds of threats to separate us from the values of the revolution or force us to accept decadent western thoughts, which are now appearing in the guise of the separation of religion from politics.

Iran Plans $1 Billion Deal With Airbus

LD2805195696 Tehran KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL in English 23 May 19 96 p 2

[Unattributed report: "Airbus Ready for One Billion Dollar Deal With Iran"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Frankfurt, May 22 (AFP) — Iran plans to buy at least 10 Airbus planes for 1.5 billion marks (one billion dollars), the 'Frankfurter Allegemeine Zeitung' daily reported Wednesday, quoting the Iranian ambassador to Germany.

The paper said negotiations were under way for the purchase of eight A-330s and two or three A-300/600 Airbus planes.

A spokesman for the Airbus-Industrie consortium in the southern French city of Toulouse confirmed that the talks were taking place, the paper added.

"Now the ball is in the Iranians' court. We are ready to sign an accord", said spokesman Robert Alizer.

According to the paper, Britain's Rolls-Royce has been selected to construct the planes' engines.

'Frankfurter Allegemeine Zeitung' quoted unnamed Iranian sources as saying that the United States had tried to disrupt the talks, as the planes were originally designed with the US-made General Electric Engines.

The paper said that for the deal, Iran's ambassador in Bonn last year contacted a senior official from Germany's Daimler-Benz company, which has a 37.9 per cent stake in Airbus Industrie through its subsidiary DASA operating in the field of aeronautics.

The talks were later suspended due to US pressure. The Iranians then opened negotiations with Russia, however, these failed to produce a result.

Iran: Commentary Views Seminar on Eradicating Poverty

LD2805181196 Tehran SALAM in Persian 22 May 96 p 2

[Commentary: "Today's Focus, a Critique"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The seminar on poverty and eradicating poverty in Iran, which was organized by the Plan and Budget Organization and attended by a number of experts on economics and sociology, has finished. To ponder on what will be the practical outcome of the seminar and what will be the fate of the poverty eradication plan and the newly raised issue of poverty eradication in the country requires a little time and patience. However, there is a point in connection with the seminar and the points raised in it that should be considered while it is topical.

The honorable heads of the executive and legislative branches spoke at the beginning and end of the seminar. In their speeches they referred to the fact that poverty has been reduced in the country. The honorable President Hashemi-Rafsanjani said in the opening session: "The figures show that the gap between the people is closing. Thanks to plans in hand, the percentage of the people below the poverty line has reached about 30 percent in recent years from 48 percent before the revolution." Honorable Majles Speaker Nateq-Nuri said in the closing session: "Compared to before the revolution poverty has been reduced by about 30 percent."

The question is, on which study and by which official body did they base their figures and, while the poverty line has not been determined in this country and the heads of the two branches declared in the same seminar that one of the important responsibilities of the Plan and Budget Organization is to determine the poverty line in the country, how can the figures for people below the poverty line for before and after the revolution be compared? (footnote 1)

The figures given on the reduction in poverty in the country show that about 30 percent out of the 48 percent of people who were below the poverty line before the revolution and lived on bare essentials, after the victory of the revolution, because of the implementation of new economic policies in the country's five-year development plans, have been able to rise above the poverty line and enjoy a standard of living with minimum comforts in society. Therefore one could say that, on the whole, the government's policies to improve the country's economic situation have been very successful and the implementation of those policies have enabled a large portion of the deprived and oppressed classes to enjoy the minimum requirements for a suitable standard of living.

If it has been so — in the past few years there has been such an outstanding achievement only with the implementation of the first and half of the second economic development plan — by continuing the same trend and following-up the current policies, soon the remaining 17 percent, who are below the poverty line, will go above it and, soon, thanks to the current economic policies, the problem of poverty in the country will be eradicated. Considering the fact that, according to executive officials, the efforts of the planners and the investments made in the first plan are beginning to bear fruit, and thus the move towards progress is speeding up, probably by the end of the second development plan there will no longer be a problem called poverty in society and most of the people will have gone above the poverty line. If so, the performance of the authorities is certainly worthy of praise and gratitude.

However, the important point is that, under such circumstances, what is the point in the executive authorities raising the issue of poverty to such a vast extent, sending shock waves through society, starting a general mobilization, and spending various sums on research and investigation into new methods of combating poverty in society? And why have the authorities suddenly raised the issue and concentrated a considerable proportion of the planning and executive manpower of the various sectors, including the Plan and Budget Organization, on the problem, which is being solved anyway? Would it not be better to use those resources on solving other problems in society that have not been solved yet? A negative answer to that question would be acceptable only if there is doubt about the assumptions in the analysis.

Footnote

1. The president said in the same seminar: Determining the poverty line, on the basis of correct facts and figures and realities in society, is an important responsibility of the Plan and Budget Organization. SALAM, 19 May 1996.

In the same seminar the Majles speaker said: Determining the poverty line and eradicating poverty requires practical and expert measures. SALAM 21 May 1996.

Iran: Hezbollah Radicals Warn Islamic Students

*LD3005215396 Tehran RESALAT in Persian
26 May 96 p 2*

["Ansar-e Hezbollah's Letter to the Islamic Student Society of Amir Kabir University"]

[FBIS Translated Text] News Desk — The Ansar-e Hezbollah have sent a letter to the Islamic Association of Students at the Amir Kabir University in which they have expressed their concern about them. The following is the text of the letter:

Take this letter as a friendly complaint and a sincere reference and not a critique or a disclosure!!

You know as well as we do that some people have tried many times in the recent past to distract the Ansar students and engage them in confrontation with their brothers, rather than warfare with the roots of cultural foulness.

They have hurled abuse at us, but we have restrained ourselves from engaging in secondary issues and have turned a deaf ear to the denunciations and blame expressed by ill-used friends.

Indeed, our brothers had practiced patience for such times and they were expecting conditions much worse than this when they decided to stand against conspiracy.

At this difficult juncture, when everybody fears condemnation, we have tried to stand courageously, and the wounds that we have suffered on our backs were expected.

We do not think that we are free from mistakes, for it is only the self-seeking individual who believes himself to be the only intelligent person — and this is due to his failure to understand religion or enjoy the basic tenets of faith. But, it is clear that the climate of blackmail inside and outside the country, against the Ansar students is a very ruthless, calculated, and even predetermined action.

Nevertheless, we believe that the Islamic Association of Students, and other organizations, are fundamentalist and Hezbollahi brotherhoods that are fighting on the front line against the enemies of the revolution. Any danger that threatens them also threatens us: their sadness is our sadness and their happiness is also ours.

We believe that many of the associations are among the vanguards and defenders of the revolution and the legacy of Imam, [Khomeyni] — may God be satisfied with him — and we have refused to accuse members of these associations of secularism, liberalism, or alliance, despite the unethical statements sent to the press.

Are you as concerned as us about the state of your own affairs?

Why do you allow an individual, who was in charge of the student-military-wing of the hypocrites [the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization] and who was shot in an armed conflict on the street before fleeing the scene in 1981, to become a senior member of your association, to become the main organizer when Haj Faraj [name as published] was speaking, to become one of his devoted defenders and to try to cause physical clashes? If it was not for the vigilance of the Ansar students, he would have achieved his objectives.

Is it necessary to befriend the associates of the Freedom Movement, Habibollah Payman, and the National Front in order to maintain an Islamic identity?

Why are you distancing yourself from your brothers and why are you saying that the living martyrs of the [Iran-Iraq] war are but a grouplet?!

Why should those who claim to be supporters of the "left" prepare the ground for the "right" and why are the anticapitalist slogans resulting in liberal merchandise?

It is unfortunate that a group of people, who have important posts and who are busy squandering in secret, are defending the policies of secularists for a variety of reasons and another group whose emotion rules their reason and are being used by the first group as scapegoats.

The school of liberalism rationalizes capitalism and the existence of classes in society. You know as well as we do that the conditions must be understood correctly and at a time when the revolution needs all its factions, its clerics, its clergy, and other groups — despite differences of preference — we should not allow opportunists or aliens to bring divisions to the ranks of the fundamentalists or to question, for one reason or another, the Militant Clergy Association or the Militant Clerics Society.

Who are the people that force brother to stand against brother and who try to achieve their political objectives through simple-minded arguments?

Why should you become, on the basis of factional or personal association, an instrument for such people who do not even believe that there are common elements among domestic factions?

Why should we become servants of propagation and propaganda for a school of thought that only aims at rationalizing the activities of capitalism in the world and that seeks the destruction of all our factions.

Today is the day of hypocrisy and double standards. Today, the liberals are reciting the prayer of the faithful and it will not be long before a secularist writes commentary on the Abu Hamzeh prayer and brings Imam Sadjad and [British philosopher, Karl] Popper to sit together at the same table.

The situation is sensitive and is becoming more complex by the day. It will be even harder to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

Brothers! We should close ranks in order to stop the infiltration of the aliens.

[Signed] In peace and friendship, the Ansar-e Hezbollah Students

[Dated] 22 May 1996

Iran: Official on Human Rights Proposals at Jeddah Assembly

LD3005202896 Tehran IRNA in English 1956 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 30, IRNA — Head of the Organization of Culture and Islamic Communication, Ayatollah Mohammad 'Ali Taskhiri, said here on Thursday that Iran's proposals at the recently held international Islamic al-Fiqh assembly at Jeddah, were endorsed and included in the final resolution.

He told IRNA that among the Iranian proposals endorsed by the al-Fiqh assembly, which is affiliated to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), was the setting up of special committees to follow up the declaration of human rights of the Cairo conference, to study the declaration of the Tehran's women conference and to condemn violation of human rights in different countries.

Taskhiri said the Iranian delegation delivered several speeches on human rights in Islam, and drew a comparison between the concept of human rights in Islam and the world declaration of human rights.

He said the next general meeting of the al-Fiqh assembly would be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Iran: IRNA Official Stresses Coverage of 'Deprived Regions'

LD3005185096 Tehran IRNA in English 1820 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Yasuj (Bovir Ahmadi va Kohkiluyeh Prov.), May 30, IRNA — Deputy managing-director for news affairs of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), Hoseyn Montazer-Mo'oud [name as received], said here today that IRNA's priorities include proper coverage of the country's deprived regions.

In his chat with local reporters he said that a highly developed information network is necessary for a factual portrayal of the cultural and economic progress of the deprived regions.

He announced IRNA's readiness to cooperate with provincial officials in construction efforts in the deprived regions.

Iran: Watershed Management Projects for Kermanshah Province

LD3005144196 Tehran IRNA in English 1213 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kermanshah, May 30, IRNA — Rls.[rials] 1.2 billion in credit is to be spent on the implementation of 13 watershed management projects in this western province by the year end (March 20, 1997).

Head of the watershed management department at the provincial construction jihad office, Suleymani, said here Thursday that the projects will be carried out in an area of 30,000 hectares of land.

The projects, he added, are aimed at preventing erosion of 20,000 cubic meters of soil.

the official said that so far similar projects had been implemented in an area of 178,000 hectares which had helped prevent wearing away of 200,000 cubic meters of soil.

Iran: Law Enforcement Body Vows Allegiance to Khomeini, Khamene'i

LD3005142996 Tehran IRNA in English 1153 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 30, IRNA — On the eve of the anniversary of the departure of the late Imam Khomeyni, thousands of the personnel of the law enforcement forces on Thursday attended the mausoleum of the late imam and renewed their allegiance to the sacred causes of the father of the Islamic revolution.

The grandson of the late imam, Seyyed Hassan Khomeyni,was also present at the ceremony.

Head of the ideological and political organization of the law enforcement agency Mohammad 'Ali Rahmani said the Islamic Republic of Iran would be eternal like the memory of the heroic event in Ashura.

Ashura is the tenth day of the mourning month of Moharram ul-Haram on which Imam Hussein, the lord of the martyrs, attained martyrdom along with 72 of his close companions.

He said the late Imam Khomeyni stood against the former regime to revive Islam and today the law enforcement personnel are fully ready to obey the commands of the leader of the Islamic revolution Ayatollah Seyyed 'Ali Khamene'i.

Iran: Eastern Regions Seized 150 Tons of Drugs Last Year

LD3005102296 Tehran IRNA in English 0939 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Arak, Central Prov., IRNA — Some 150 tons of illicit drugs were seized in country's eastern regions last year, disclosed the deputy commander of the law enforcement forces here on Thursday.

In a ceremony to introduce the provincial law enforcement commander, Brigadier Mohsen Ansari added that the narcotics were seized in operations carried out by the special battalions of law enforcement in eastern areas of the country. He said that contribution of the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps to the operations was significant.

According to the official, at present eastern and western regions of the country enjoy complete security.

In the ceremony Brigadier Mohammad Javad Bafqi was appointed as new commander of the provincial law enforcement department.

Iran: Deflated Bread Prices Discussed

NC2605171596 Tehran RESALAT in Persian 11 May 96 p 3

[Commentary by 'Abbas Darvish-Moqaddam: "The Price of Bread"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The price of a loaf of bread recently increased by 10 rials. Bread is a basic strategic commodity and it is being used as a weapon against the poor and deprived countries today. In Iran 75 percent of the people's diet is bread, which is why they are sensitive to this issue. Any change in the price of bread that is not planned can have an unfavorable impact. Bread is not a commodity for the Economic Council to treat on the basis of supply and demand and determine its price on this basis.

Inevitable and sometimes unavoidable reasons find us facing an increase in the price of bread each year so the Ministry of Commerce and the governors general should explain these increases. If the issue is discussed openly and sincerely the people will accept it, difficult as it may be. Unfortunately, a basic weakness of the Commerce Ministry is the lack of active public relations, both as far as organization and officials' and managers' approaches to the mass media and public are concerned. This weakness meant the increase of 10 rials a loaf was initially refuted before being arbitrarily and irresponsibly reconfirmed!

The guaranteed rate for a kilogram of flour from farmers last [Iranian] year [ending 20 March 1996] was 330 rials. It rose to 430 rials this year to protect producers. During the past year 5.9 million tonnes of wheat was purchased from farmers. This is expected to increase to 6.4 million tonnes this year. While more is paid for wheat bought from farmers the amount of wheat purchased has also increased. Assume 430 rials a kg of wheat, plus grinding, transport, and other costs, the price of a kilogram of flour sold to bakeries would be 680 rials. It is now available at 30 to 40 rials.

With a population increase and a 7-percent rise in consumption, some wheat is imported. A tonne of wheat in recent years sold for between $80 and $180. This has now increased on world markets to $250 per tonne, which, based on 1,750 rials to the dollar, is 430 rials. A kilogram of bread is sold at an average price of $2, which, at 1,750 rials to the dollar, is 3,500 rials. At 3,000 rials to the dollar it is 6,000 rials.

A laudable Commerce Ministry step is that despite paying the farmers more for their wheat, despite the increase in the price of imported wheat, and despite buying and consuming more, it has prevented any increase in the price of wheat from being passed on to the bakeries. During meetings of the Economic Council it has objected to any increase in price, even though the ministry would have benefited from such an increase. This will be counted as a point in the ministry's favor by the deprived and oppressed people. Based on the budget bill there has been no obstacle to the Grains Organization, which is affiliated with the Commerce Ministry, in increasing the price of wheat sold to the bakeries. It had been envisaged that the organization's income would rise from between 46 to 61 billion rials. But, with the measures adopted, the price of wheat sold to the bakeries did not rise. This shows that the Commerce Ministry is working toward fulfilling social justice.

In view of the increase in the price of wheat, the fourth Majles term increased subsidies from 1.8 trillion rials in 1373 [year ending 20 March 1994] to 3.5 trillion rials in 1374. To prevent a sharp rise in the price of bread the subsidy was increased to 5 trillion rials this year.

The subsidies envisaged by the fourth Majles and the measures taken by the Commerce Ministry meet the needs of much of the expenditure on flour sold to bakeries; they do not include other increases such as the increase in the price of fuel (gasoil), the 20-percent increase in wages, and an increase in the price of baking soda. Under such conditions, either the bakers will be thrown off the right track and cover their costs by selling flour and bread on the free market or they should be allowed to introduce an increase (like the 10-rial increase in the price of a loaf of bread) to cover these costs.

While God considers bakery to be a good profession, not many people are interested in it. Profitability is very low. If bakers do not have an income equal to that of other professions they should, at least, not be working at a loss.

Last year inflation rose by about 50 percent. Should not a baker, who swelters in front of an oven to furnish the people's daily needs, be able to make a profit? If not as much as the other professions, at least similar to most people?

While the price of bread should not and cannot be increased, because of the impact on the low-income sector, its low price too should not lead to waste, which is an unforgivable sin. One of the problems with cheap bread is that it is smuggled out of the country. Because of the way people feel about bread, smuggling is not stopped. Currently, every loaf of bread smuggled out of the country costs 900 rials.

Nepal & Bhutan

Nepal: Parliamentarians—Bhutan Not 'Positive' Over Refugee Issue

LD3005155896 Kathmandu Radio Nepal in English 1415 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The House of Representatives Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Committee at its meeting today unanimously adopted a resolution thanking the European parliament for its expression of concern at the plight of Bhutanese refugees. The meeting also appreciated the observations made and decisions taken by the European Parliament in this connection and said these have come as moral support in resolving the refugee tangle.

The resolution (?said despite) sincere efforts by Nepal, Bhutan has not shown any positive attitude toward solving the problem and calls on the Bhutanese Government to stop cultural persecution of people of Nepalese origin and allow the refugees to return to their homes with honour and dignity, as they are genuine citizens of Bhutan. The meeting also calls on the Indian Government to break its silence and help resolve the refugee problem, so that good-neighborly relations between Nepal, Bhutan, and India can be further strengthened.

Nepal: Government Cuts Back on Overseas Trips, Hospitality

LD3005172396 Kathmandu Radio Nepal in English 1415 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Decisions have been taken regarding delegations going abroad under the leadership of the prime minister, budgetary allocations, government receptions, [words indistinct], and staffing levels at institutions and organizations under complete government ownership, with the aim of economizing on the financial resources at the disposal of His Majesty's Government and in particular [words indistinct] (?general) expenditure.

According to the decisions taken, the membership of delegations going abroad under the leadership of the prime minister is to be limited to (?15), and to 12 in case of visits overseas. His Majesty's Government will bear the expenses only for visits abroad for participation in the annual meetings of international organizations in which Nepal is a member and for highly necessary visits concerning bilateral relations. The number of government receptions is to be reduced, the number of (?invitees) to such receptions kept down to a minimum and generally no alcoholic drink is to be served at receptions.

Pakistan

Pakistan: Islamabad TV Reports Clashes Amid Kashmir Elections

BK3005142096 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 30 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Reports from occupied Kashmir speak of widespread clashes and demonstrations marking the last phase of sham Indian parliamentary elections in Kashmir. There was very low turnout. The demonstrations erupted all over Srinagar soon after the start of polling this morning. The polling booths gave a deserted look as the people refused to comply despite threats by Indian military. For further details, PTV correspondent Ghulam Nabi Khayal from New Delhi:

[Begin Khayal recording] Launching of rockets at the security forces, gunfire, and protest demonstrations all over Kashmir marked the day of election for Srinagar and Udhampur parliamentary seats in Jammu and Kashmir state today. Paramilitary forces resorted to firing at cane charged angry crowds protesting against holding of elections at several places in Srinagar. The police also arrested Javed Mir, a Hurriyat [All Parties Hurriyat Conference] leader who was leading a demonstration in the old city. More than 50 people were injured in the cane charging by the police. About 1 dozen mediamen were also beaten up by Border Security Force personnel in Batmaloo in Srinagar. They were expressing their resentment against the forces for their manhandling the members of assembly which refused to cast their votes. Reports said that thousands of non-Kashmiris, including the laborers from the Indian states of Bihar, Punjab, and U.P. [Uttar Pradesh], were also used to cast their fictitious votes. Most of the telephones in Srinagar were put out of order for the whole day, while a total strike in the valley continued for the 18th day today.

Ghulam Nabi Khayal, PTV News, New Delhi. [end recording]

According to Kashmir Media Service, the troops were seen forcing the people at Jawaharnagar, Habbakadal, Batmaloo, Qamarwadi, Haiderpura, Chanapura, Badshahi Bagh, Khaniar, and other localities of Srinagar to come out of their homes and go to the polling stations. But the people stoutly resisted the troops and refused to oblige them. [passage omitted]

Several blasts were heard in Srinagar since last night, but details were not available. In Naosehra, a military vehicle was blasted by the mojahedin, killing many soldiers.

Pakistan: PRC's Li Peng Sends Message on Anniversary of Ties

BK2905155596 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1500 GMT 29 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng has congratulated Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the people of Pakistan on the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. In a message, he said despite world changes and local developments, the good neighbor relations between the two countries have soundly developed. Li Peng expressed satisfaction with bilateral cooperation in the political, economic, trade, science and technology, and cultural fields. He added that strengthening friendly relations with Pakistan is a never ending principle of Chinese foreign policy.

Pakistan: Defense Outlays Proposed in 1996-97 Budget Reported

BK3005084296 Peshawar THE FRONTIER POST in English 30 May 96 p 6

[Report by Zamir Haider and Umer Farooq]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] ISLAMABAD— The federal government plans to allocate Rs [rupees] 125.25 billion to the armed forces in the upcoming budget for the fiscal year 1996-97, sources in the Ministry of Finance told THE FRONTIER POST.

Last year, the defence outlay was Rs 115.25 billion. Later in February 1996, to plug the gap resulting from devaluation of the rupee, another Rs 2.3 billion were provided to defence services, raising the total allocation to Rs 117.55 billion.

The increase of Rs 8 billion in the defence allocation in the coming federal budget, which is to be presented on June 13, is in fact, a decrease, considering the current official rate of inflation which stands at 9.6 percent. Experts are of the opinion that the actual decrease will be in the region of one percent.

Proposal for the increase have been floated by economic wizards of the government, currently involved in the budget-making process. However, the final word in this regard will come from Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

The last meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee also discussed in detail defence allocation for the next fiscal year. According to the sources, they have sent their proposals to the federal government and their demand is much higher than the figure proposed by the economic wizards.

The government has been under pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other donor agencies to reduce its defence budget "while keeping in view security requirements of the country." Although the government claims that the IMF is not at all dictating the budget for the fiscal year 1996-97, the fact remains that to get the next tranche released under the standby loan agreement and to settle the terms for the 1.5 billion dollars under Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF), Islamabad is bound to follow the terms and conditions of the Fund.

The allocation of Rs 115.25 billion in the budget for the fiscal year 1995-96 was 6.88 percent of the GDP. In 1994-95, too, it was 6.88 percent, in 1993-94, it was 6.96, in 1992-93, it was 7.7 percent and in 1991-92 it was 7.74 percent of the GDP. However, during 1995-96, the defense budget of India was 2.39 percent of GDP.

According to reports, India's defense budget for the fiscal year 1996-97 is expected to be Rupees 278.19

billion, more than double the amount Pakistan plans to spend on defence. It is pertinent to mention here that Indians do not include various defense-related expenditures like pensions in their defence outlays.

"Increase or decrease is directly related to the threat perception, which these days is maximum from Pakistan's point of view," said an army official. "Actually the irony is that the government has taken no political initiative to reduce the threat to security of the country in the recent past", he added.

The ambitious missile programme of India, withdrawal of six Indian divisions from its border with China (which will be deployed along Pakistani border and in Held Kashmir) and everyday verbal threats from Indian leaders to attack Pakistan are some of the factors cited by defence analysts for the maximum level of threat perception vis-a-vis India.

"It is only through a political or diplomatic initiative that an atmosphere could be created for reduction of defence allocations," said another official.

Pakistan: Navy Asks U.S. To Sell 'Obsolete' Orions to Third Country

BK2805100596 Islamabad PAKISTAN in Urdu 28 May 96 pp 1,5

[Report by PAKISTAN staff reporter in Islamabad]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Pakistan Navy has suggested selling the anti-naval aircraft Orion P3-C to a third country, as they are now obsolete. According to Defense Ministry sources, this was proposed during Secretary of Defense Production Mazhar Rafi's visit to Washington. During talks held with U.S. authorities, he made it clear that the Pakistan Navy has upgraded its Atlantic aircraft to meet its requirements. It no longer needs Orion planes as they are not equipped with the right equipment. According to reliable sources, the decision to buy three Orion P3-C airplanes was made in 1988, but the Pressler Amendment delayed the actual purchase. The Pakistan Navy upgraded its Atlantic airplanes and equipped them with latest equipment, at a cost $300 million.

Sources say that with the passage of Brown Amendment, Pakistan is likely to receive $368 million worth of military equipment. This includes three Orion P3-Cs, but military sources say these planes have turned obsolete now. The purchase of these planes, however, will cause an additional burden of $16 million on Pakistan's budget. [passage omitted]

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka: Electricity, Water Supplies Disrupted by Strike

BK3005124496 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 30 May 96

[Unattributed report — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The government on Wednesday night [29 May] declared the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) and the Lanka Electricity Company (LECO) essential services which require employees to report to work immediately.

The government also proclaimed stringent regulations under the Public Security Ordinance which makes it an offence for failure to report to work within 24 hours of the gazetting of those regulations. The punishment for the offence include confiscation of property and loss of employment.

The sudden walk out by the members of the CEB trade unions at 12 noon yesterday had plunged the entire country into darkness and had disrupted the water supply too.

"Why did they punish us?", said many callers to the Daily News who said they had put them under severe inconvenience.

The strikers failed to heed the appeal of the Power and Energy Ministry which said the President had given a directive to the Public Enterprises Reform Commission (PERC) not to take action on the offers received from foreign investors for the purchase of 51 percent of the shares of the LECO.

The statement signed by Power and Energy Ministry secretary Jaliya Medagama said: "At a meeting on 21 May 1996 between the chairman of the Public Enterprises Reform Commission (PERC) and Her Excellency, it was decided that no action be taken on the offers received from foreign investors since the offers were below the government assessed rate".

The statement also said the trade unions walked out after the government decision was conveyed to the unions. They had also not given the required notice for a strike and had not considered the amount of inconvenience their action would cause the general public.

In another statement the Power and Energy Ministry said the disruption of power beginning at 12 noon yesterday was not due to the normal power cut but was due to the walk out of employees from their work places, switching off the power supply in the entire country.

The public security ordinance stipulates any person engaged or employed by the CEB and LECO who fails or refuses to attend to his or her work within 24 hours of the publication of the regulations be deemed to have forthwith terminated or vacated his employment and have committed an offence.

Obstructing or impeding any person from carrying his work or inciting anyone not to do his work are also considered offenses.

Calling a strike by any trade union without giving the required 14 days notice also constitutes an offence. Such organisations can be proscribed. When a trade union is proscribed, office holders of that union not only cease to hold office but are guilty of an offence. Bank accounts of such trade unions are also freezed.

A provision is also made for the confiscation of the property of those who are found guilty under these regulations.

Soon after the country was denied of electricity, water distribution grounded to a halt. The Water Supply Board announced that its distribution system had been affected because of its inability to pump water.

Residents underwent untold hardships because of lack of water and said "Don't these people have a heart".

The CEB trade unions walked out when they were at talks with the CEB chairman Dr. Leslie Herath who tried his best to meet some of the trade union demands.

"When we were trying our best to negotiate a settlement the trade unions walked out," said a top Power and Energy ministry official.

A distraught mother said: "How can I send my children to school. We have no water to wash their faces".

Sri Lanka: LTTE Dispatch Reports Offensive on Troops in Jaffna

BK2905090096 (Internet) Tamil Eelam News WWW in Tamil 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE] launched attacks on three military positions over the past two days in the areas occupied and controlled by the Sri Lankan military in the Jaffna peninsula. Two soldiers were killed and four, including an officer, were seriously injured in attack on a military fortification in Kodigamam at 0730 on 23 May. That same day, the LTTE launched a hand grenade attack on the military fortification in front of the Chavakachcheri Women's College. There is no report on the losses suffered by the military. The troops, who emerged from their fortification in Ponnalai, also came under attack yesterday. There is no report of any damage from this attack.

After military hooligans stabbed eight people to death, including a young girl, in Chavakachcheri, civilians have been trying to escape from that area. A civilian who escaped from Chavakachcheri and arrived in Wanni, stated that the people in that area are in a great panic, and that most of them are thinking about how to escape to Wanni.

The high-handed behavior of the military shows an upward trend at Velikamam, which is under the clutches of the military. As civilians are facing intimidations, government employees are also being threatened by the military. An employee of the rural works department has received death threats from the military should he fail to submit the list of family members, relatives, and supporters of Maveerar. The employee was so frightened by these threats that he came to Wanni the very next day with his family.

An acute shortage of rice in Velikamam has been reported. The price of white rice has gone up to 90 rupees a kilogram. It is stated that this sort of rice is seldom available for even this price.

Continuous missile attacks were carried out from the Elephant Pass camp on 23 May. They began at 2230 and continued until early the next morning. These attacks were launched toward the areas surrounding the camp as well as on coastal villages. People are frightened by the attacks that target civilian areas. Horrendous missile attacks, artillery shelling, and aerial bombings are being carried out from Trincomalee Mudali Kulam military camp in surrounding jungle areas. These attacks have greatly affected flora and fauna.

The Sri Lankan troops who have been facing humiliating defeats in the hands of the LTTE in the east, are directing their fury on innocent civilians. The Sri Lankan Special Task Force commandos, entered the houses of civilians in the Amparai District last week and let loose their hooliganism. They beat up and tormented the people and destroyed their belongings. They derived sadistic pleasure by breaking their household utensils. A number of civilians were injured during this orgy of violence perpetrated by government troops. One Rasaiah Sasikala sustained a leg fracture.

Freedom fighter Captain Sathian from Batticaloa attained martyrdom in a mishap that took place at Karadiyanaru in the Batticaloa District the day before yesterday. Our tributes go to that hero who perished with a passion for the liberation of our motherland.

Thanks.

The Tigers' aspirations: motherland of Tamil Eelam!

Sri Lanka: President Says Attitude on Power Crisis 'Disappointing'

BK2705040896 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 27 May 96

[Report by Pramod de Silva—received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The present power crisis will be solved when an additional 550 MW of power comes on-line next year, President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga said on Sunday.

"Agreements have already been signed for these power projects and preparations are underway for construction. Until then, we will have to face some hardships if there is little or no rain," Kumaratunga told a meeting held to mark the 80th birthday of Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike in Veyangoda, western province.

She said the present crisis was a result of an overdependence on hydropower generation, which accounts for more than 85% of electricity in the national grid.

"A developing country like ours should have explored alternative sources and means of power generation some time ago to cope with the ever-increasing demand," the president said.

"It is lamentable that the previous regime has not added even one megawatt to the national grid during the last seven years of its rule. Instead, some politicians were happily accepting bribes for power projects which never saw the light of day," she added.

She urged the public to cooperate fully to conserve energy at this crucial hour and to change their carefree attitudes to crises of this nature.

"The public attitude towards the power crisis is most disappointing. There is little effort to save power on one's own other than berating the government from the President downwards. No one pauses to think what he or she can do to save power. This is a time to think what we can do for the country and not what the country can do for us," Kumaratunga said .

She recalled how an Australian diplomat had expressed shock and dismay at the callous disregard of Lankans for power conservation. He had said that Australian families collectively agreed to switch on only a minimum number of bulbs when their country faced power cuts during a certain period.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Power and Energy said the present capacity of the national grid is 1,350 MW. The government has given approval for the following projects:

—40 MW Asian Development Bank funded Thermal Power Plant at Sapugaskanda -under construction.
—Rehabilitation of Samanalawewa Power Plant -being implemented.
—Rehabilitation of 88 MW Sapugaskanda Thermal Power Plant-being implemented.
—40 MW Power Thermal Power Plant at Sapugaskanda funded by KFW [expansion not published].
—150 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant funded by Overseas Economic Co-operation Fund of Japan.
—150 MW Combined Cycle power plant BOO/BOT [expansions not published] basis at Kelanitissa Power Station
—Biwater Mini Hydro Power Projects 35 MW
—Storthert Mini Hydro Power Projects 15 MW
—Broadlands Hydro Power project 40 MW
—KHD Thermal Power Plant 51 MW

The power and energy ministry spokesman also said that the government has taken the following steps to minimise the effects of the power crisis:

1. Enhancement of the thermal power generation capacity by repairing the Kelanitissa and Sapugaskanda Power Stations.
2. Encouraging the private sector to self generate their power requirements.
3. Encouraging the public sector and the private sector to conserve power by offering incentives.
4. Local representatives of foreign power generation companies have been called in to offer quick solutions such as barge-mounted power supply systems.
5. Advancing of local time by one hour to extend daylight hours and thereby save power.

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